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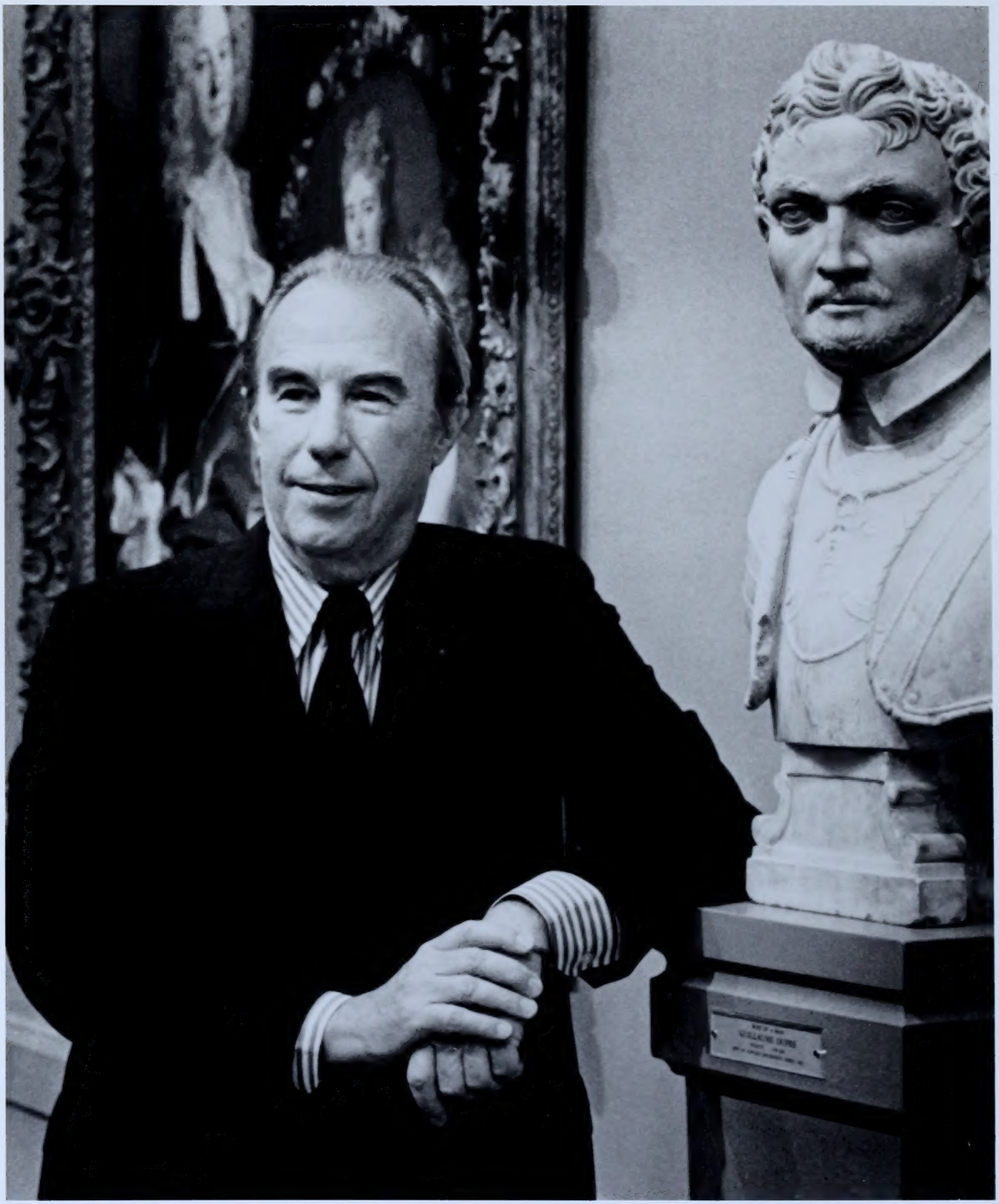

THE MUSEUM IN THE CREATION OF COMMUNITY

Otto Wittmann

Interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith

Art History Oral Documentation Project

Compiled under the auspices
of the
Getty Center for the History of
Art and the Humanities

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Frontispiece: Otto Wittmann at the Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo, Ohio, 1976. Photograph courtesy of Otto Wittmann.

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Richard Cándida Smith, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Michigan, interviewed Otto Wittmann at his home in Montecito, California. A total of 20.5 hours were recorded. The interview was edited by Katherine P. Smith. During his review of the transcript Mr. Wittmann made moderate changes throughout for clarification and occasionally elaboration of a point. As a result, the transcript does not match the tapes exactly, but it more clearly reflects Mr. Wittmann's intentions.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY

Otto Wittmann, consultant to major American art museums, several corporate art collections and to the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, is widely recognized for his leadership in the arts and for the high standards of his art acquisitions.

Mr. Wittmann has served as Trustee of the J.Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles, California, as well as Consultant to the Trust and to the J. Paul Getty Museum. Mr. Wittmann has also served as Chairman of the Trust's Art Acquisitions Committee. He is Director Emeritus, Vice President, and Consultant to the Toledo Museum of Art and was formerly a Trustee and Consultant to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Educated at Harvard, Mr. Wittmann served as a Major in the U.S. Air Force during World War II. Subsequently, he served in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) as a special intelligence officer concerned with the discovery and restitution of works of art looted in Europe during the war.

During his thirty-year career at Toledo, Mr. Wittmann received international acclaim for the quality of the works of art he acquired for Toledo's museum. Toledo's rapidly expanding art collections tripled during Mr. Wittmann's tenure. He was one of the first museum directors to combine furniture, sculpture and decorative arts with paintings in the same galleries and he has consistently selected acquisitions of highest quality for Toledo's museum.

During his ten-year tenure as Trustee and Consultant to the J. Paul Getty Trust, Mr. Wittmann presented the first proposals for expanding activities beyond the museum through development of the Trust. As Chairman of the Acquisitions Committee during the same period, he was instrumental in developing expanded areas of collecting for the museum. He encouraged many major acquisitions, such as the famed portrait of Cosimo I de Medici by Pontormo, two allegorical paintings by Dosso Dossi, major examples of French furniture, and the distinguished Ludwig Collection of early medieval manuscripts.

An articulate advocate of education in American museums, Mr. Wittmann has written and lectured extensively on this subject. He is also a leader in the development of international relationships among museums, having organized significant exhibitions of European art for American museums. He has also organized overseas exhibitions

for the United States Information Agency.

Mr. Wittmann was among the first museum professionals to encourage the establishment of federal programs for the arts and humanities, and frequently testified before congressional committees in support of legislation to encourage the arts in the United States. He was one of the founding members of the National Council on the Arts, appointed by the president of the United States at its inception in 1964. He has also served on Museum Advisory Panels of the National Endowments for the Arts and for the Humanities and on the Arts Advisory Panel for the Internal Revenue Service, as well as on the National Accessions Committee for American Embassies. He was the first chairman of the Advisory Committee to the Federal Council of Arts and Humanities responsible for implementing the initial programs of the Federal Arts Indemnity Act.

Mr. Wittmann was a member of the National Collection of Fine Arts Commission as well as a member of the U.S. ICOM National Committee, and has served as Secretary-General for the ICOM Committee for Museums of Glass. He was also a founding member of the Ohio Arts Council.

Active in many professional art associations, Mr. Wittmann served twice as President of the American Association of Art Museum Directors and is former Vice President of the American Association of Museums. He is former director of the College Art Association, and is a fellow of the Museums Association (England).

Mr. Wittmann is the author of exhibition catalogues and scholarly articles on European and American arts, and was editorial chairman of the Toledo Museum's *Catalogue of European Paintings*, as well as editor of that museum's quarterly bulletin *Museum News*. He was an adjunct professor of art history, University of Toledo, and is consultant to several professional art journals, including the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*.

Recognized for his leadership in the development of international cultural relations, Mr. Wittmann has been decorated by several European governments. France has bestowed upon him the decorations of Officer, Legion of Honor, and Commander, Order of Arts and Letters; from Italy, Commander, Order of Merit; and from the Netherlands, Officer, Order of Orange-Nassau.

Mr. Wittmann also holds honorary degrees from several American universities, including the University of Michigan, Kenyon College, Skidmore College, the University of Toledo, and Bowling Green State University. For his "outstanding

performance and lasting contribution to the museum profession," he received from the American Association of Museums its Distinguished Service Award, the nation's highest museum recognition.

In 1989, Mr. Wittmann was elected Trustee Emeritus of the J. Paul Getty Trust. He continues as Consultant to the Trust and to the J. Paul Getty Museum. He also continues as Vice President of the Toledo Museum of Art.

PREFACE

Having recently read and edited the over 400-page typescript of this oral interview of my life so far, I have become aware of the surprising difference between an interview, an autobiography, or a biography, and a human life—as it appears to me at least.

An interview of course depends on the knowledge and skill of the interviewer and on the reaction and openness of the respondant. In this instance, this somewhat Socratic dialogue was carried on by an intelligent, knowledgeable historian who had informed himself of my specific fields of interest without considering himself an expert in art or the operations of art museums. His greatest skill seemed to me to be that of a sympathetic listener, with only an occasional prompting to amplify a too brief interpretation or to divert to a new direction a too exhaustive explanation on my part.

Yet, in reading the total interview as a representation of a life, it seems to me to be rather a series of episodes, of events only sometimes related, of meetings with others who in some way or at some time entered my life. An autobiography or biography would, I am sure, have been quite different, with probably more dramatic emphasis or color, and perhaps inclusion of some events or thoughts which may have seemed more important to me than to the interviewer. It might have been more interesting to read. It might have been a more representative picture of what I think my life has meant, reflecting emotions and thoughts as much as actions and contacts with others.

And what about life itself? What has been omitted in this somewhat chronological series of episodes in the interview? It seems to me that a basic omission is my remarkably good fortune, governed often by random luck rather than conscious direction on my part. One thinks he knows what he wants to accomplish and how to get where he wants to be, but it is often the unexpected by-ways which prove to be of greatest value. I think of the army in World War II, a controlled life of new and uncomfortable dimensions to me, which I disliked—until I decided to make the best of it and learn what I could from my fellow soldiers from walks of life unknown to me before. It was a most important source of human understanding, which affected the remainder of my life. Later, my deliberate decision to accept an appointment in a newly organized branch of the Air Force changed my life for the following four years, resulted in a wonderful marriage, led by chance to a spectacular assignment in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and then after the war to a museum I joined because I wanted to devote my life to constructive general

education, little realizing that it would lead to thirty exciting years of acquiring two-thirds of the art in that museum.

These are random actions, sometimes self-directed, but often the outgrowth of apparently undirected good fortune. How else to account for a satisfying, sharing, balanced marriage of fifty years to one wife with common interests, great intelligence, and warm, supportive companionship. That's luck! And good health for both of us during all this time, and two fine sons both now satisfied with their own adult careers and their own families. And many good close friends.

All these things and many other personal aspects are the background for the episodes which follow in the interview. Without them the events would have been different, yet this important side of life can hardly be adequately expressed in an interview intended to recount various relationships which may have made this life worth recording. I hope this preface will provide an added dimension to what follows in the interview.

Otto Wittmann
July 1995

SESSION ONE: 11 JANUARY, 1993

[Tape I, Side One]

SMITH: The first question we always ask is when and where were you born?

WITTMANN: I was born in Kansas City, Missouri, on September 1, 1911.

SMITH: Tell me a little bit about your parents.

WITTMANN: My family on my father's side came from Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century. Heinrich Wittmann, my grandfather, and his wife came first to Iowa and then to Lincoln, Nebraska, where my father Otto and his two brothers, Joseph and Oscar, grew up. Later, my father, after his marriage to Beatrice Knox Billingsley, moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where I was born, in 1911. There was only one other child, my sister Winifred, who is two years younger than I. We both went to a nearby public school, Norman School. We lived in a quiet, modest, middle-class neighborhood. Our house was a bungalow with three bedrooms, a sleeping porch, living room, dining room—a nice 1910 house. I went for one year to a public high school, and then my father decided that a private school would provide a better background for college. I therefore transferred to the Country Day School, and my sister to Barstow's, both in Kansas City. When I graduated from there I was accepted by Harvard College. I started in the Fall of 1929 and graduated in 1933. My sister later went to Radcliffe. But Kansas City was a nice quiet kind of place. We had friends, not

a great many.

SMITH: This was a suburban area?

WITTMANN: Suburban area, yes, as suburban as Kansas City was in those days. It wasn't a very big city at that time. We lived on the edge of a big cliff. There were woods all around which we could walk through. I had a good time as I was growing up.

SMITH: What kind of work did your father do?

WITTMANN: I should tell you a little bit about my grandfather, Heinrich Wittmann. When he came to this country he was a harness maker. Horses were important in those days. He was very successful. Lincoln, Nebraska, where he lived, which is the capital of the state of Nebraska, is very flat; it has practically no hills whatsoever, so bicycles began to be popular and my grandfather said, "I've got to get into the bicycle business." He started a new company, Wittmann Bicycle Company, which also became successful. Then as my father and my uncles grew up and became young men, automobiles began to develop. They became quite interested in that new form of transportation. We're talking now about the early part of the twentieth century. One of my uncles, Joseph Wittmann, became interested in building an automobile. In those days everybody was building an automobile; it wasn't concentrated in Detroit at all. There were beginning automobile factories in various parts of the country. Joseph Wittmann

thought he could build a car that would be a success, and he got to know the early car makers, especially Henry Ford. He traveled with Ford at various times, because they'd take these new cars that they were building, go long distances with them and see how they worked. Henry Ford went on to Detroit and moved out of his world of course. Joseph Wittmann was inventive, but he never made much of a success with his automobile. He then decided he would develop a company to make tents and various supplies for early automobiles. He went into a lot of different businesses in his lifetime and never made a very great success of any of them.

Meanwhile, my father decided he would go to Kansas City, and he started something called The Kansas City Automobile Supply Company, which became a very successful business, because in those days automobiles were sold without any of the supplies that we expect now. For example, there were no rearview mirrors; no shock absorbers (they just had springs in them); headlights burned gas, not electricity; there were no turn signals or power brakes; and there were no windshield wipers. All of those things had to be bought separately. There was a great market at that time for supplies for automobiles, so my father's company became successful and branches were opened in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.

However, when I was seven, my mother died in the great flu epidemic of

1918. You remember, thousands died at that time and she was unfortunately one of them. So I never knew her very well—at seven you don't get to know adults too well. I can remember her, but that's about all. I can remember one incident when I was about six. We had a Cadillac at that time. Cadillac was a four-cylinder car then, a beautiful, big car, but not very heavy as modern cars are—it was a touring car. It had two back and front seats with a canvas top. My mother was backing out of the driveway one day at our house in Kansas City, and I apparently was right there. She backed right over one of my legs but it didn't seem to hurt it; it didn't break it at all. She was of course terribly upset by the whole thing, but the doctor came and said, "No damage, it's flexible. He's a little kid, and he's all right." So nothing happened. This is one of the main incidents I can remember about my mother, and the other one was that she had long, beautiful hair. I remember her combing and brushing her hair.

When she died, my father decided then that he would take care of us, my sister and myself. He never did remarry until very, very late in life, so we were raised by a housekeeper, Mrs. Watson. She really took care of us and had a lot to do with our upbringing. We only had this one housekeeper until we went away to college. She was a quiet, nice woman. She must have treated us very well because we both grew up perfectly happily. But my father decided that if he was to continue to take care of us without a wife, he would have to give up his

automobile supply company, so he sold that business and went into partnership with an old friend of his, Gould F. Beach. They formed a new company, the Beach Wittmann Company. It was the same kind of business, selling specialized equipment for automobiles. Again, new branches were developed in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. So, as young teenagers, my sister and I traveled with him sometimes in the summer to visit these various branches. It was the first time I had ever been in Texas or Oklahoma.

SMITH: Did your father go to college?

WITTMANN: No, he didn't go to college, but he always thought that we should.

SMITH: You were the first one in the family to go on to a university?

WITTMANN: Except for my mother. I should talk a little bit about my mother's background. My mother's family was of English and Scotch heritage. Her maiden name was Billingsley, and her middle name was Knox (her mother's name). Her father, Lorenzo Billingsley, had gone to college and had been a captain in the cavalry in the Civil War. After the war he became a lawyer in Lincoln, Nebraska, and he was the principal attorney for the Burlington Railroad, one of the early western railroads, with regional headquarters in Lincoln. My father and mother were married there in Lincoln, I don't remember exactly which year, but they lived there a few years before they decided to move to Kansas

City. When grandfather Billingsley retired in Lincoln, he moved to the West Coast. He lived first in Portland, Oregon, and then came south to live in San Diego.

I have another memory of my mother: I can remember going by train—the Santa Fe Railroad—from Kansas City to San Diego, where my grandfather was then living, and staying with him. All I can remember is that it rained every day we were there, and my mother had to find lots of books to read to my sister and me to keep us happy. I can remember my first introduction to Peter Rabbit. My grandfather had by then married Joy, who became our step-grandmother. So that's my mother's background. Her family, the Billingsleys, moved to Lincoln, and my German grandfather who'd come from Germany was there—a mixed German-English heritage.

When I was a teenager, my father thought I should work part of each summer, so I worked in the service shop of his own company. It was a good experience and I learned a lot from the mechanics who installed various automobile equipment. I gained a good knowledge of mechanics that way, and it was an opportunity for me to learn about people—how they behaved and what they were like.

My step-grandmother, Joy Billingsley, then a widow, was living in Pasadena and had a summer place at Manhattan Beach, on the Pacific Coast. I

used to visit her every summer, so I've known California from the time I was about sixteen years old. I'd take the Santa Fe Railroad from Kansas City. I didn't have much money, so I traveled by coach, and the trip took three days. I enjoyed those summers, which were spent at the seashore most of the time. I had a love of California in my background from that time on.

I should speak now of my sister Winifred. She went to Radcliffe, where she majored in art history. She was also a good artist. She had gone to the Kansas City Art Institute to study before she went to college. She got through about three years of Radcliffe and then said she'd had enough and left and went to New York, where she began studying and painting seriously.

SMITH: Did she go to the New York Art Students League?

WITTMANN: She went to the Art Students League. By the way, we are now talking of the thirties of course—this was in '32, I suppose. She was also very beautiful, and this was just at the time when professional modeling for the fashion magazines was becoming a career. She enrolled with the major model agency of the day—Connover I think the name was. She became a very successful model and appeared on the cover of both *Harper's Bazaar* and *Vogue* and other magazines. She was a great fashion model, not only beautiful, but she knew how to carry herself, and she had a natural flair for how to wear clothes. She became very successful at this and most of the famous fashion photographers of the day

photographed her. Years later, when I was a trustee of the [J. Paul] Getty Museum—the Getty has a great collection of photographs—I said to her, "You ought to give the photographs of yourself to the Getty, not because of you as a model, but because of the photographers who took your picture." She did, and now the Getty photography collection contains fashion photographs of the thirties, done by most of the famous photographers of the day—but that's an aside.

My sister had a great many friends when she was at Radcliffe, and one of them was Just Lunning, a Dane. His father owned the rights to the George Jensen silver business in this country, with a grand retail store on Fifth Avenue and Fifty-third Street in New York. Just had been born in Denmark, but his father came to this country, and Just lived with him. His mother continued to live in Denmark. So Just was educated in this country and then went to Harvard, where he met my sister. They both also knew Margaret [Hill], who was later to become my wife; she had also gone to Radcliffe. It was my sister who introduced me to my future wife, during World War II. Just Lunning joined the United States Navy as a lieutenant. He was stationed in Washington and was assigned to the OSS [Office of Strategic Services] most of the time, although he was often in navy uniform. He was in England and Denmark and various parts of Europe during the war.

SMITH: Did you get involved with the OSS through him?

WITTMANN: Not through him, but through another source. It is interesting that he was in the OSS, and my wife was in another part of the OSS—she was recruited for a different department—and later I was transferred to the OSS from the Air Force. The OSS was such a compartmentalized organization that we often didn't know exactly what the other one was doing. My wife and I waited until late in the war, really, to be married—at a time when we knew Just Lunning would be home from Europe. He was to be my best man.

SMITH: I have a couple more questions. One is, you mentioned your sister having an interest in art and going to the Kansas City Art Institute. What was the role of culture in your family and the kind of exposure to the arts that you received as you were growing up?

WITTMANN: In Kansas City? Well, none. So far as I know I never saw any original works of art until I went to college. There were certainly reproductions in friends' houses, and maybe an original print, but I didn't know enough to know what they were. There was no museum in Kansas City at that time. There was a little place in the public library where there were a few reproductions of original works of art by old masters—"hand-painted" copies, given by William Rockhill Nelson, owner of both newspapers in town, the *Kansas City Star* and the *Kansas City Times*. When Nelson died, in 1926, he left his entire fortune to the city to build a museum. So, in 1929, they started to build the William Rockhill

Nelson Gallery of Art. By that time I was in college.

Although there was no original art in Kansas City, I was very interested in writing and in literature. The *New Yorker* magazine had started by that time (1925), and I was very much interested in it and subscribed to it. The mother of one of my good friends was a writer and she often talked to me about writing as a career. When I went off to college I expected to major in English literature and to write. My adviser said, "If you like English, do take some English courses in addition to the required freshman courses. But you have to take one more course. Why don't you try a course in art?" I said, "Well, I don't know a thing about art." He said I should try it anyway because I might find it interesting. So I took the course and I became fascinated with it, and by the time I was a sophomore I had changed my mind and had decided that I would major in art history rather than in English.

I continued to take courses in English literature, and I continued my interest in writing by becoming an editor of the *Harvard Crimson*, which was the daily college newspaper. I enjoyed that experience. The other side of the picture was that during my freshman year I met students who would become good life-long friends. I only knew one Harvard freshman when I arrived. He was a classmate at Country Day School, oriented towards art because he wanted to be an architect. Other friends I met in my freshman class were interested in art

because they had come from New York and had been brought up in a more sophisticated background. They knew the New York museums, and they knew very early that they wanted to do something with art, so they majored in art history.

I think those friends in my freshman year, plus that extra course in art which I had to take, changed my whole life, because I didn't know anything about art in those days. I had never had any experience with it. I didn't know what it was. Of course, later, when I changed my major to art history, I found out very soon that Harvard was specializing in training people to work in art museums. In 1929 and 1930 many young museums were growing and developing. The only place that trained professionals for museums was Harvard, and that happened because of one man of whom I'll speak a little later, Paul J. Sachs.

I soon learned, having gotten involved in art history, that there was a new kind of career out there, if I wanted it, in the museum world. I didn't know what a museum was, but I began to go to the museums in and around Boston because I was forced to by Harvard's art history classes. We would be assigned to visit and write papers on some aspect of a museum in Boston or Cambridge. Harvard itself had the Fogg Art Museum, where all our classes were held. That was a great small museum, the best of the college museums at that time.

Museum careers were beginning to evolve, and some of Paul Sachs's students, who had graduated in 1928, 1929, were going out into museums. Paul Sachs himself believed in museums. So Harvard's teaching at that time was slanted toward museums rather than academia.

SMITH: Who was the teacher of that first class you took that turned you toward art?

WITTMANN: Arthur Pope had a great influence on me, as did George Edgell, then director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and George Chase, who taught Greek and Roman art. Chase was good but rather dry. Edgell was a brilliant lecturer, really brilliant. Arthur Pope, however, had the greatest influence. He was a brilliant lecturer in his own interesting way. He talked about aesthetics, really, although I hardly knew the word at the time, but that's what he was doing. He would compare art from the nineteenth century with the fifteenth century, then to modern art. His lectures were great revelations to me.

SMITH: What was the name of the student from Kansas City that—

WITTMANN: Oh, Collis Hardenbergh.

SMITH: Eventually he became an architect?

WITTMANN: He became a good architect and practiced in Minneapolis for some years, chiefly designing domestic architecture, and then died much too early—at least twenty years ago, I suppose. He went on to Harvard architectural

school after he graduated and then went out to Minneapolis—I've forgotten why, probably because of the girl he married—and lived there comfortably and happily.

SMITH: What was your father's reaction to your becoming an art history major?

WITTMANN: He was marvelous. He said to me, "You know, I've got this business. It's been a very successful business. I've made a lot of money from it. I've enjoyed doing it, and I've sort of hoped that you would want to take it over one day, but I don't believe in standing in the way of anybody who wants to do something. If you want a different kind of career you should go ahead and do it. I am perfectly willing to put up all the expenses for your undergraduate years at Harvard. However, after you graduate you should make your own living. I believe in people having a college education. I didn't have a chance to go to college but you do. I want to support you that far, and then after that you're on your own." So that's what he did; he was a wonderful person that way. When he retired, he sold this second business, the Beach Wittmann Company, and his partner retired at the same time. They sold it to George Lockridge, who kept the name Beach Wittmann, and continued the business for years. My father still had a financial interest in the company and this provided him with an income—he was perfectly comfortable.

When I was in Country Day School (about 1926) we bought a much larger house in another part of town and enjoyed it very much. It was a very pretty

part of town, in an important part of Kansas City called the Country Club District, which had been founded by a man with a lot of special ideas who later entered my life because he helped me get my first job in Kansas City. His name was J. C. Nichols.

SMITH: Have you ever thought about why you and your sister both gravitated towards careers in the arts even though your family had no background in that area?

WITTMANN: Well, I think my mother did, you see. That's the part I don't know, because she died when I was seven. She went to the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, where she knew Willa Cather. She traveled in Europe after college—her father sent her with some friends, and they had a good time. I think she had a real interest in art herself. I've read some of her diaries of her trip. She went to all the great European museums and I think she must have had some interest in art. However, this could only have been passed on to me in the most subconscious, unknowing way, because I cannot remember her ever talking to me about art. I knew that I had this strong interest in art only from the time I took those art courses, because until I went to college, I always thought I was going to be a writer. While I wrote a great deal for museum publications, I never became a novelist or a poet or anything like that—not creative in that sense.

SMITH: There's another person I wanted to ask you about, who I think you first

met in Kansas City, and that's Franklin Murphy.

WITTMANN: Franklin is a few years younger than I. We knew each other, not too well, but always kept in touch. We met first at Westport High School before I transferred to the Country Day School. He then dropped out of my life completely, but came back during the days when he became chancellor of the University of Kansas. This is much later in both of our lives, because he pursued an academic administrative career, as you know. He came out to Los Angeles as chancellor of UCLA. He has for years had a strong interest in the arts, was very much interested in museums, and developed a fine college museum at the University of Kansas. We have kept in touch off and on since then.

SMITH: I'd like to talk about your Harvard years now, and I guess the first question is, why did you decide on Harvard as opposed to the University of Nebraska, where your mother had gone, or another private school?

WITTMANN: Well, because our Country Day School slanted its students toward the eastern colleges—but I knew nothing about them. A lot of the recent graduates of Country Day School had gone to Princeton, so there was a great Princeton contingent. I applied to Princeton, and Harvard, and I think I may have applied to the University of Missouri. Very few graduates applied to Kansas at that time, and certainly nobody to Nebraska. I was not accepted at Princeton but I was accepted at Harvard, so it was as simple as that. When my

sister graduated, two years later, I think she probably did the same thing. I know she applied to Radcliffe. I don't know whether she applied to Vassar, she probably did. Of course you remember we're dealing with the years of the Depression. This was 1929, and I think that maybe I was accepted easily because of that as much as anything. Colleges were glad to have students who could pay. Things were very hard in those days. While I was in Harvard the banks all closed, and there was a period when none of us had any money at all till they opened the banks again; this was the great bank crisis of that time.

SMITH: Was your father's business—

WITTMANN: I believe he had sold his business, but it meant that he couldn't draw money at that moment.

SMITH: But in general his income was not affected?

WITTMANN: Not very much. He always said it was affected greatly, but it never seemed to be. He lived in the style he wanted to live, and he always managed to pay the bills to Harvard and Radcliffe. Of course tuition in those days was $400 and living, food, and all the rest of it totaled about $1200. We lived in the dormitories and later in the Harvard house system, which had just started in those days.

SMITH: Can I ask you in which house you lived?

WITTMANN: It was Dunster House.

SMITH: Did you go home for the summers?

WITTMANN: Yes, I went home for the summer; we didn't go home at Christmas time very often because it was so far. It had to be by train, and of course the weather was pretty miserable and you had to change trains in Chicago. However, I always went home in the summertime.

SMITH: I'd like to talk about some of the teachers and some of the classes that you took and the degree to which they affected the way you viewed art and your career as a museum director. The first person obviously I think is Paul J. Sachs.

WITTMANN: Yes, who I hardly knew at the beginning, of course. He only taught advanced undergraduate courses, so this occurred a little later. In my freshman year I took several English courses and also the required courses, which I didn't like very much. I was very poor at chemistry, and I wasn't very good at government (I didn't like government). I took a philosophy course I didn't like very much. I liked the English courses very much.

SMITH: Did you take any courses from Perry Miller?

WITTMANN: No, I didn't. I could have but I didn't. [Chester Noyes] Greenough was one of the wonderful English professors there. He taught a general course in eighteenth-century English literature, a very good course which I remember with great pleasure.

When I was a freshman we all lived in Smith Hall and other dormitories.

We were assigned a roommate if we didn't have one. My assigned roommate was from a large group that went to Harvard from Exeter, Groton, or Andover. They stuck pretty much to themselves, but he was I must say always very nice to me, a naive person from the West. He'd never been to the Middle West, didn't know anything about it. I remember we ate in a common dining room, and in those days we had printed menus, waitresses, and women who made our beds and cleaned our rooms. It was a very luxurious life.

In my sophomore year I moved into the Harvard Yard with several friends who became roommates. We lived in Holworthy Hall, which was built in the 1820s, I think with money from lotteries—a common way to fund college buildings at that time. The Harvard house system buildings were being built, but they weren't yet ready to be occupied, and so it wasn't until our junior year that we moved into Dunster House. We stayed together during our junior and senior years.

SMITH: Why did you choose Dunster?

WITTMANN: By that time I think we knew who was going to be head of the various houses and Professor Greenough was going to be head of Dunster. It was also because my friends, the ones who were interested in art too, also wanted to go there. We could choose what we wanted, and we got our first choice. By that time we knew the headmaster and the assistant headmaster and liked them

both; they became very good friends.

[Tape I, Side Two]

WITTMANN: Freshman year at Harvard was a year of finding myself and discovering new friends who were interested in art, making other friends, and deciding that I really didn't want to major in English at all. I wanted to major in art. You decide your major in your sophomore year. Freshman year is just taken up with doing what you have to do. My decision to major in art meant that I had to take more art courses, and I did that, but I also filled in wherever I could with English courses because I still liked English very much. I used to sit in on [George] Kittredge's famous course on Shakespeare. Professor Kittredge was very old by that time, but a marvelous man to listen to, and if I could spare the time I would sit and listen in his classes. He always welcomed visitors. He loved to talk—a great, great man.

In my sophomore year I was beginning to get serious about art, and in this year I took two of the courses that I felt affected me a great deal. One of them was taught by Arthur Pope, about whom I have spoken earlier, who taught the theory of art. This was an interesting course because he also insisted that we take a studio course that was taught by a young Englishman—not so that we could learn to paint, but so that we could understand painting and what it was. We all had to do some oil painting, we had to do tempera painting, watercolor, and we

also had to work with dry plaster and wet plaster to make frescoes. We learned that with oil you could always paint over to correct mistakes but that with the other media you'd had it—you couldn't change it. This was one of the things Pope wanted to teach us: the men who did frescoes were giants of their times, the great Renaissance fresco painters. They only put on the wall enough wet plaster that they could cover with paint in a day's time. It couldn't be changed once it was done. They had to be sure of what they were doing. They had to be sure of their colors. The next day when they put up new plaster they had to be sure they had the same colors so they could continue the painting and know what they wanted to do. For me this was an extraordinary thing to think about.

Then we looked at small medieval paintings done on wood panels covered with gesso and then painted on with tempera paint, which was pigment mixed with egg yolk. We learned how to mix up pigment with egg yolk and put it on white plaster gesso. We had to prepare the tempera panel ourselves and sand it down until it was absolutely egg smooth; then we could paint on it, but we couldn't change it if we made a mistake. So we learned how delicate these little paintings were and yet how they lasted for centuries because the colors were so secure. They had nothing in them that would fade. And the medium itself—a thick wood panel, on top of which was a very thin layer of plaster, but how really solid that was. If it was done properly, it would last for centuries. Today

you can look at a tempera painting done in the fifteenth century, and it's still in beautiful condition, whereas often paintings done by some contemporary artist two years ago have begun to fall apart because the painters today don't care about technique. Well, these were some of the things we talked about in this class.

SMITH: Did you have any interest in doing art yourself?

WITTMANN: Not very much; I did a little bit, but not very much. I was always more interested in the history of art.

SMITH: Were the paintings you did representational, or abstract?

WITTMANN: They were representational because that's what we had to do. It was a case of just teaching us how it was done. In the case of the tempera painting we were copying a religious painting, as I remember it. The teacher we had was a very creative painter himself. He was a great watercolorist, and he taught us to be a little bit freer about watercolor. There we tried to create something, but I wasn't very creative—not like my sister, who was a really good creative artist.

The other course that I think influenced me a great deal at that time was a course in Oriental art. I don't remember why I ever decided to take it, but it was taught by Professor Langdon Warner. Langdon Warner was a big bluff, red-haired man with a red mustache, who could get up and talk about anything to do with the Orient. He had traveled a great deal in the Orient himself, and he was a

great scholar of Oriental art. He had forged into territory where practically no Western men had gone: the great tombs of Lung-Mên, and Yüng-Kang, far out in the western provinces of China. He had gone there on camelback and had written a book about the subject. He was a fascinating man. Langdon Warner entered my life at that time, and I became very much interested in Oriental art. He was a great advocate of Chinese art. Japanese art was considered as a kind of derivative art. People didn't talk much at Harvard about Japanese art in those days; they did later on, but then it was mostly Chinese art. He also covered Indian art and some of the art of Tibet. It was a fascinating course, and I was fascinated as much as anything by what he had done. I remember I bought a copy of a book of his about traveling in China. But those two courses I think, Pope's, which was completely theory, and Langdon Warner's Oriental art were great influences on me.

I also took a course with Professor Chandler Post. Post was teaching some phases of Renaissance art and Spanish art. I think I took the Renaissance course the first year. Post was not my idea of a great teacher. He was a rapid-fire talker, and he had his facts right at his fingertips. He never forgot anything, he could remember dates and names and everything. He gave them to us just like that, verbally; he very seldom ever wrote anything down for us. Still, when I look back at my notes from his course they are confusing because I didn't know

what the names really were. They were names of Italian Renaissance artists and I only learned who they were by reading books, but Post depended completely on his own memory, and therefore he challenged our memory. His tests were all factual tests: write twenty minutes on so-and-so, what were his dates, what did he do, where were his main pictures, what were the titles of his main pictures—that's all he cared about, and that to me was not great teaching.

I was much more influenced by Arthur Pope, who said, "I don't think I'll give an exam. You've learned something from me, I know, and that's about all I can give you." That sort of thing. He was wonderful. We were graded on those works of art that we did, but only on the basis of how good we were technically at making the fresco stay on the wall. But Post gave these strict tests, and I did fairly well on them but not too well, because I really don't like that kind of approach. You know, it was one of those things where you'd cram the night before and remember all those dates and names, hoping that he would ask you for those names and not others. It wasn't my idea of how you learned things. So I never did take Chandler Post's course in Spanish art, because it was filled with other Spanish names I never wanted to know anyway; I never did learn much about that.

SMITH: Was that kind of factual approach to art history typical of the period?

WITTMANN: Partly typical of the period. Post was the most extreme case that

I knew. At the same time, I don't remember now whether it was as a sophomore or as a junior, I took my first course with Paul Sachs. Probably it was my junior year because he didn't like to take people before that. He taught a course in French art history. There was already a good book on the subject by [R. H.] Wilenski. Paul Sachs loved art. He was a collector himself, and he would talk a great deal about artists and what they stood for and how they influenced the development of French art, and what it meant. He would talk about works of art and then he'd tell us to go into the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and look at such and such a painting because he wanted us to look at the colors and see how they differed from the colors in Italian art—that kind of thing. To me that was much better teaching.

Paul Sachs had this other characteristic which was very interesting to all of us, and very difficult for us. He would always start out and lecture for a while on some subject, and then he would stop suddenly and say, "Now, young man, what about this, how do you feel about this?" He got so he knew us all, and he'd call on us by name—he had a small class—and he would do this deliberately and very well, so he kept us on our toes that way. We couldn't just sit there and not listen, because we knew that he might call on us and ask us: "Now I said this, do you really believe this or do you think that it's something else?" He would give us a chance to talk. This is the kind of thing which later

evolved into this museum course which he gave and which influenced us all, but the museum course was only for postgraduates.

He was a good teacher because it was obvious that he loved the art. He knew his facts and his history perfectly well, and gave us what was necessary there, but he also had more to say—he knew what he was talking about. You got the personality of the artist, who the artist was, why he was important in the history of France, and this meant a great deal more to me. So he was another man who began to influence me at that time. Sachs talked a lot about original works of art and about museums, and also about drawings, because he was a great collector of drawings himself.

SMITH: To what degree were the Fogg collections integrated into the classes taught?

WITTMANN: You didn't have to ever look at a work of art in the museum if you didn't want to, but most of the teachers would make assignments which required you to go and look at the galleries there. The Fogg Museum itself is an old museum, and it held great works of art that had been donated to it in the late nineteenth century; great Italian works of art that had been collected by earlier professors. Harvard alumni continued to give works of art to the Fogg Museum. It was a good small general collection; it even had American paintings and American silver. I wouldn't call it a warehouse, but it was the headquarters for

all the works of art at Harvard. If the president of Harvard had a work of art in his office, it was cataloged at the Fogg Museum. The Fogg was responsible for all Harvard's art and kept inventories. Portraits of many of the early college presidents were painted by the great early artists of America, such as Copley and Stuart. The silver belonged to the early presidents of Harvard and also to the college itself, so these were all preserved at the Fogg Museum.

SMITH: Did you take any courses with Benjamin Rowland?

WITTMANN: Yes. Ben was a strange man. I took a course with him after I had taken the course with Langdon Warner. Ben Rowland had started as a professor of European Renaissance art, and he knew a lot about it. He had a really great mind. He remembered everything and grew greatly; he always expanded his knowledge. He was much younger, much closer to us in age, and we got to know him pretty well at the time. Ben became interested in Oriental art and took over Langdon Warner's field after Langdon began to retire. I always heard that Ben had come from a coal-mining family in Pennsylvania, and he looked like it. He was small and dark, but he was just as bright as he could be, and he switched with no trouble from European art to Oriental art and became a great expert in that. He also collected baroque European art, and by the time he died he had a great collection. Some of us were only beginning to wake up to baroque art and what it meant, and Ben all this time was going out

and buying works of art of that kind. At the time he died, he had a great collection, including some good Oriental art. He was a man we all admired very much and liked, and he was still of an age where we could go out and party and drink with him. He was a good friend. I lost track of him after I left college, but every time I went back, I'd go see him. He didn't play a great part in my life after that, except that I always looked up to him.

SMITH: Were there any classes in American art being taught at that time?

WITTMANN: Harvard was quite limited in my day; this tradition goes back to the nineteenth century. It was always based on Europe, and medieval art was always taught—this was Kingsley Porter's great field, and Kingsley Porter of course was a great teacher. He was a little bit too far along for me. By the time I got to the point where I could take one of his courses, he had retired and gone off to live in Ireland, where he simply disappeared. No one knew what became of him. So Harvard offered medieval European art, Oriental art, Renaissance art in Europe, and so far as I remember there was no course in American art. Finally Ben Rowland did teach a course in American art, but this was after I had graduated. There was nothing beyond the Renaissance taught; there was no course in baroque art, there was no course in modern art, there was no course in nineteenth-century art, except what Paul Sachs did in the French field.

SMITH: His French class covered what years?

WITTMANN: Well, really it went from the beginning of French art as he saw it, which was, I suppose, 1500 up through the nineteenth century, through the impressionists, because he himself was a great collector of impressionist art, but it never got up beyond that. He never talked to us about twentieth-century art.

SMITH: Did he talk about the postimpressionists?

WITTMANN: Yes, well, van Gogh and so forth, van Gogh and Gauguin.

SMITH: Did he get up to Picasso?

WITTMANN: No, no, I'll tell you about that later on; the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art is going to enter in here someplace. Contemporary art was not taught, you see; it was a very limited field. Professor Leonard Opdycke, when I was a junior or senior, started to teach a course in baroque art, but he wasn't a very good teacher and I got no real sense of what baroque art was all about until later on, when I sort of figured it out for myself. He did have the names and he did show the works of art, but that was beyond me by that time; I really never understood it. I sat in on his course; I did not take it for credit. But that was just the beginning; it was kind of scary to teach up beyond the Renaissance. Few did that!

SMITH: Did Charles Kuhn teach?

WITTMANN: Professor Charles Kuhn was around. He is the other man I wanted to talk about.

SMITH: He was at the Busch-Reisinger Museum.

WITTMANN: Charles Kuhn was a gentle soul, a very nice man indeed, and he was interested in modern art. But I guess there wasn't too much chance to teach a course in that field. He taught a course in Germanic art, the art of central Europe I guess, and then he did become head of the Busch-Reisinger Museum, which was Harvard's Germanic Museum. He entered my life when I became involved with the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art because of his great interest in the subject; he was very helpful to us in that. But "Khaki Kuhn" as we called him—I think that was K-h-a-k-i Kuhn not C-o-c-k-y—was a little bit out of the mainstream in that he was heading up a Germanic Museum which nobody went to and trying to teach Germanic art at a time when nobody thought it was very important or very good. He was very far out from all the Italian Renaissance specialists that were teaching there. As he matured, he played a more important part in developing courses in later periods.

SMITH: What about Fred[erick B.] Deknatel?

WITTMANN: Yes, Fred Deknatel. Fred was a very likable man who we all thought was a good friend, and he also taught some of these peripheral subjects. I think maybe you can remember what Fred Deknatel taught.

SMITH: Well, he wound up teaching a modern art class.

WITTMANN: That's right, he did wind up doing that, but at that time when I

first knew him he wasn't teaching it. I know that's what he wanted to do, and I think he was also one of the ones who tried to get up maybe into the eighteenth century when no one was doing anything about that. Fred was one who we all liked as a person very much, but I don't think I ever took a course with him.

SMITH: It sounds like there was a lot of interaction between the students and teachers.

WITTMANN: There was, yes, one of the best things about Harvard, and this is where Dunster House comes in. The whole house system, as you know, was started by a grant from a Harvard alumnus who gave enough money to build these buildings along the river, which became the various "houses" as they called them, based on the English system that we all went to one university or one college, really. Harvard College is what we were part of, but also the houses were there—they called them that to differentiate them from Harvard College—where you lived your own life with your own friends. I suppose there were about two hundred students in one of these houses. They were bigger than dormitories, and you took your meals there. You got to see your friends. There were lectures. There were social opportunities. One of the headmaster's jobs was to see that you got to the various dinner parties he would give for a few at a time. His wife was always there, and it gave you a chance, really, for some kind of social life. The assistant headmaster was usually much younger and had his

own quarters in each house. He was more apt to bring in undergraduates on an informal basis and have parties with them. That was where we got to see a lot of these younger professors who would come and talk to us, some of them were adjutants to the house I guess—they were adjoined in some way. I believe that Ben Rowland was an adjutant to Dunster. But each house very quickly developed its own character, and Dunster seemed to develop a reputation as a house for undergraduates interested in the arts.

All the Harvard houses had common dining rooms, with menus and waitresses. We were not assigned tables. We sat at different tables and eventually I knew most of the students in our house. Among the undergraduates majoring in fine arts and living in Dunster House were Henry McIlhenny and John Newberry. John Newberry, from Detroit, and Henry McIlhenny, from Philadelphia, were both in my class—1933. We became good friends. John and Henry both came from wealthy families. Jack Newberry's Detroit family was connected with Packard automobiles, I believe. Henry McIlhenny's Philadelphia family fortune came from water meters. Professor Paul Sachs knew both families.

Perhaps I should talk about Paul Sachs's background here. Paul Sachs was a member of the New York Sachs family, partners in Goldman Sachs. In the First World War he was a captain in the U.S. Army, stationed in Paris. He

always recounted to his classes that he bought his first art when he was twelve years old, and it was a color reproduction of a painting. He said, "You can buy a reproduction if you want and live with it. You can learn something from it." He said he finally learned that original art was even better. During the war, Degas died, and his estate, consisting of the art left in his studio, was placed at auction in Paris. The French weren't eager to buy because they feared Paris would be bombed and their possessions lost, so Paul Sachs, as a young U.S. Army captain, went to that auction and bought a great many drawings by Degas for very little money and sent them home. From that time on he became a great collector. Degas drawings became a continuing factor in his future collecting. Degas was always his hero from then on.

Sachs survived the war, came back to New York and said to his family, "You expect me now to join the family firm of Goldman Sachs as an investment banker. What I really want to do is to go up to Harvard to teach art. I'm going up to talk to them." So he went up to the Fogg Art Museum, of which Edward Waldo Forbes was then the director. Edward Forbes was a Cantabridgian, a Harvard professor, and also an artist. His chief interest was in the conservation of works of art, and he had started a complete conservation studio in the attic of the Fogg. The story goes that he welcomed Paul Sachs and he said, "We would welcome you at Harvard. In fact, why don't you become the associate director

of the museum? We'll both be associate directors and jointly operate the Fogg Museum, and you can also teach if you wish." That's how Sachs got his position at Harvard and began to teach. He taught French art because no one else was doing it, and he liked it. He bought a beautiful old house in Cambridge, "Shady Hill," where he and his wife lived, and he continued to collect art for himself—which eventually came to Harvard.

Now to return to McIlhenny and Newberry. Both became protégés of Paul Sachs. While he talked of collecting art in his lectures, he persuaded Jack Newberry and Henry McIlhenny to begin to collect art for themselves. To them he would say, "Next weekend go down to New York and see such and such a dealer. He's got some wonderful drawings, and you go look at them, find which ones you like, and buy them. By this time you know enough about Degas and other impressionist artists. Make your own choice, but do buy something. You can afford to buy and you will learn and enjoy, as I have. Bring your purchases back here and keep them in your rooms in Dunster." So these men would go to see the New York dealers separately, one weekend at a time, buy a work of art, bring it back, and put it in their room.

Paul Sachs felt if you lived with a work of art, sooner or later you'd really begin to love it, you'd understand what you were looking at, and you'd learn from it that way. He felt that those who could afford it should collect art.

So McIlhenny and Newberry did, and they soon became rivals. Knowing of the interest of my roommates and myself, Henry would phone and say, "Come on over. I've brought back a new work of art you might like to see, a new Degas drawing." We of course were thrilled to see a beautiful original drawing owned by a Dunster friend. Jack Newberry would phone after another weekend in New York and say, "Hey, come on over. I just bought a new drawing." We would come over and see his latest acquisition. Over the years that they were undergraduates, they both formed fascinating collections, thanks to Paul Sachs.

I was interested because their selections developed in different ways. Jack Newberry never quite had the exquisite taste of Henry McIlhenny. Henry had a marvelous "eye" and was a great collector. He could walk in any place and choose just the right picture. Henry expanded beyond drawings and began to collect paintings and of course became one of the great collectors of my generation, probably in some ways the greatest collector of nineteenth-century art.

SMITH: Primarily French?

WITTMANN: Primarily French. All this under the influence of Sachs. Jack Newberry went back to Detroit after graduation and before the war became honorary curator of drawings at the Detroit Institute of Arts. He became a very good curator, in charge of the entire drawings department. His own drawings

were also lent to that museum. During World War II he was in the navy. Some years later he died suddenly, leaving all his works of art to the Detroit Institute of Arts, where they are now. It was a very fine drawing collection that he left to them.

Henry McIlhenny went back to Philadelphia after he graduated. His family collected old masters. His mother owned some fine Rembrandts, but this was not Henry's taste. His mother collected what she wanted to collect, and Henry went on to collect what he wanted to collect. Henry's sister, incidentally, became a significant collector of impressionist art. Henry became an honorary curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and later a trustee, and finally president. He and his family played a great part in that institution. Meanwhile, being a serious collector, he bought a beautiful house in Rittenhouse Square, where he maintained his collection, by that time not only of drawings but of a great many works of paintings, furniture, decorative arts. When he died he left everything to the museum there in Philadelphia, except for some of the furniture which they later sold. He was one of the great collectors of our time who started his collecting in those undergraduate years in Harvard under the tutelage of Sachs. Those two men also had a considerable influence on my own future career. I kept in touch with Henry up until his death and saw him frequently. I also saw Jack Newberry because at one point in my life I lived near Detroit, but I

never was quite as close to Jack as I was to Henry. All this came out of Dunster House and the relationships we all had with the Harvard professors there, specifically with Paul Sachs.

SMITH: Had you taken Sachs's museum course as an undergraduate?

WITTMANN: As a graduate.

SMITH: When you came back to Harvard?

WITTMANN: Most of my undergraduate art history friends went on to graduate school after graduation in 1933 and took Paul Sachs's museum course in the following year. However, I told you about my father, who said that he would support me through my undergraduate work at Harvard, but would not take care of any graduate work because he felt I should earn it. When I graduated, he gave me $500 to go to Europe. I had never been to Europe in my life, and I managed to stretch that out for three months and had a great time. I went to England, France, Italy, and Germany and saw many of the great museums of Europe, including Berlin and Munich—this was before the war of course. As it was 1933, Hitler was just coming to power. I saw some of the Hitler parades in Munich . . . tough, tough time.

While I was still a senior in college I learned that the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City had begun to hire a staff for the new museum which was to open in December 1933—there was already a small collection, a small staff, and a

director. I wrote to the trustees, who I knew because they were all friends of the family. One of them was J. C. Nichols, whom I mentioned before—a real community leader in Kansas City. He was a great pioneer of residential development. Nichols was one of three trustees of this museum, and I'd gone to Country Day School with his son Miller Nichols.

So, anyway, I wrote to him and said, "I'm just out of Harvard, and I majored in fine arts, so I know all about art. Would there be a job for me at the Nelson Gallery? They must need some new people." I learned about possible vacancies because another friend of mine at Harvard, Philip Beam, had gotten a job there; he had also just graduated in my class. There were two other trustees I knew, and I wrote to them as well. Mr. Nichols wrote back a cordial letter: "Certainly we'd like to have you here. We can't pay very much, we don't have much money, and of course these are depressed times, but we'll be glad to take you on at a salary that probably will be okay, and you can get a start."

I thought that was wonderful because the hardest thing in any life is to get started in a career. The first job is the hardest. I felt I had to make a living. My father wasn't going to support me anymore. He did say I could live at home if I wanted, so I did. So I was fortunate to get a job in Kansas City, where I could work at the museum and live at home. I believe I was paid approximately $60 a month, or something like that. Even for those times that wasn't much.

But there I was, fresh out of college. I knew I had to start making money, so I went to work. The director of the museum was Paul Gardner, who had been at Harvard a few years earlier than I. Gardner was really more interested in the ballet than anything else, but he decided that a museum director's career was more lucrative than the ballet theater.

SMITH: He was only a few years older than you were?

WITTMANN: Maybe a little older than that. The "professional" staff consisted of Philip Beam and myself, two young men just out of Harvard, and an attractive Smith College graduate, Frances Askew, the sister of an art dealer in New York—a wonderful girl. We began in September 1933 and the museum was to open in December, so we had only three months to prepare an empty museum for its grand opening—the newest significant museum in America at that time. Our director said, "Now look, we've got to have a lot of help, and the help's going to be mostly physical labor, so you fellows have to learn how to lift things, how to do things, and you're going to be working with the museum's carpenter and the museum's engineer." So we learned very quickly about all that goes on in a museum, from the ground up. We learned about carrying heavy objects and how you arrange pictures in galleries. Paul, who was more of an aesthete than anything else, would come up into the galleries and the paintings would be sitting on the floor, around the walls. He would then say, "Move this picture here and

move this picture there. Let's arrange the wall this way," almost like directing a ballet, and he would place the pictures around the room so that the colors and shapes were balanced.

[Tape II, Side One]

WITTMANN: I also learned how to hang a picture, how to put a sculpture on a pedestal, and how to arrange furniture and decorative art so as to complement the paintings.

SMITH: How did Gardner's approach, say, compare with what you had already experienced at the Fogg, or the Boston Museum of Fine Arts?

WITTMANN: I had no experience; the works of art were already there. I had never watched anybody put an exhibit on the wall. They were on the wall, and I guess I just assumed they were always on the wall! I never thought about it.

SMITH: Was his approach more modern at the time than that of the Fogg or the Boston Museum of Fine Arts?

WITTMANN: Yes, it was. I think his galleries in the end looked better because he had that aesthetic sense for color and design, which I think came to him through the ballet, strangely enough, so that, yes, he did add a new dimension. He seldom balanced a wall by putting a picture in the center and then two evenly spaced on either side. He put them off-balance a little bit and it made the whole thing more dynamic and more interesting. I learned from Paul Gardner almost

subconsciously by watching him, observing him. He wasn't a very friendly person exactly; rather reserved and often moody.

So I worked at the Nelson Gallery for four years. By the end of that time my salary had gone up a little bit, and, living at home, I had managed to save some money. I had enough money then to think about going back to Harvard to take Paul Sachs's museum course. I had kept in touch with Sachs. I wrote him that I wanted to come back to take his course, and some other courses in art—a graduate year at Harvard—but I still hadn't saved enough money to pay the tuition and other expenses. I had enough money for board and room, but I couldn't pay the full tuition. He wrote back, "Don't worry about that. You've had four years of museum experience already, you already know about museums. I invite you to come back and be in my class, and you can be my assistant. If you become my assistant you don't have to do much, but at least you won't have to pay tuition because you will be working for me. I'm not going to pay you anything, it's just a title, but it's a title I can justify. I've always had an assistant, and what you will do for me is arrange my class visits to collectors in the Philadelphia and New York areas. This will involve arranging transportation and hotels for us. I have a wonderful secretary and she'll do most of the work for you, but you're in charge."

So, indeed, that's what happened; that's how I paid for that year. I took

Paul Sachs's museum course four years after all my former undergraduate friends had taken it. I became the senior member of Sachs's museum course of about fourteen students. I had already learned much about museums through practical experience.

SMITH: To wrap up the Harvard undergraduate years, there were a couple more teachers I wanted to ask you about. One was Kenneth [J.] Conant. Had you taken courses with him?

WITTMANN: No, I occasionally audited his courses, but never for credit.

SMITH: Wilhelm Koehler?

WITTMANN: He was at Harvard only after I returned for graduate study. However, he had a great influence on me, as did [Jakob] Rosenberg.

SMITH: And they were not there when you were an undergraduate?

WITTMANN: No, you see they both came out of Nazi Germany, and Paul Sachs had a great deal to do with rescuing them and offering them professorships in Harvard's art department. Many at Harvard were active in rescuing great scholars from Germany. Both of those men came to Harvard after Hitler came to power.

SMITH: Now you had mentioned that Edward Waldo Forbes had a great influence on your life—was that at this time or later?

WITTMANN: Well, as much then as any time. Forbes was always somebody I

looked up to because he had a great feeling for art and a great love for museums and what they could do for people. He was an exact opposite of Paul Sachs. He was a tall, rangy, long-haired, vague person, who sometimes would recognize you and other times wouldn't, whereas Paul Sachs was a short, stout, dynamic, fast-talking, active person who couldn't wait to jump into anything and ask you what you thought about this or that—that's the way he taught. So they were just as opposite as they could be and yet they got along beautifully together; they both liked each other, and both had a great deal to do with the formation and the development of the Fogg Museum.

SMITH: Did you take any classes from him?

WITTMANN: No. I think Forbes was teaching only a graduate course in conservation of paintings because that was his chief interest. The great Harvard conservation program started at that time grew to be very important and very scientific—unfortunately too scientific—later on.

SMITH: In terms of the way the fine arts department at Harvard taught, was art history connected to social, political, economic, and intellectual history?

WITTMANN: No, not at all. Art history was art history, and our professors would say to us, "Now young men, this is art history we are talking about, not general history, and if you want to study general history you must take general history courses." Art history was very specialized and very specific in my

undergraduate days.

SMITH: Was there a Charles Eliot Norton tradition still alive at Harvard? I mean aside from the lectures, was that kind of Ruskinian point of view still alive?

WITTMANN: It wasn't very much alive for undergraduates; that is, we heard the name, we knew vaguely who he had been. But as I learned more, later on—I'm sure this is later on in life, not as an undergraduate—I realized that much of the teaching that was done even in my days had evolved from Charles Eliot Norton's general theories on art. Part of this strong emphasis on the Renaissance I think came from that source, and certainly the emphasis on Europe, also. But of course it wasn't only Charles Eliot Norton; it was literature . . . Henry James and others, who were Eurocentric. No one ever talked about ethnic art at all; that belonged to anthropology in those days.

SMITH: But there was ethnic art at Harvard's Peabody Museum [of Archaeology and Ethnology], wasn't there?

WITTMANN: The Peabody was there, but art history students seldom went there; that was the scientific museum. I think the only time that I ever went into the Peabody Museum as an undergraduate was to look at the glass flowers, because somebody had told me I ought to. They were supposed to be slightly artistic, but few of my friends ever looked at any of that wonderful ethnic material in the Peabody. As courses in modern art were not taught in my

undergraduate years, there was no opportunity to know of the influence of African sculpture on modern artists, for example.

SMITH: What about what's now called the [Arthur M.] Sackler Museum, which I guess then was called the Semitic Museum—was that integrated into the art history program?

WITTMANN: No, I can't remember that it played any part at all in our lives. The Germanic Museum existed of course, but it was filled with plaster casts at that time—very little original art. Our professors would say, "Well, there's that Germanic Museum, but you know it's just filled with copies, you don't need to go over there. Go look at the Fogg Museum; it has original works of art, or Fenway Court, or the Boston Museum—original works of art, not copies." And so the Germanic Museum didn't come alive until Charles Kuhn became its director and began to bring in contemporary German art. Then he put the plaster casts in storage, but as you know it's now a fine museum.

SMITH: In terms of the intellectual influences operating in the fine arts department, were Clive Bell and Roger Fry discussed? Were their theories important?

WITTMANN: Yes, but only by Paul Sachs, as I remember. So I knew the names, and I knew their relationship to the *Burlington Magazine*.

SMITH: What about the German tradition, I mean, say, [Erwin] Panofsky's

work on symbolic form?

WITTMANN: There was very little German influence in American scholarship until the great German expatriate scholars came to America, after I had graduated.

SMITH: What were you reading in the art history classes?

WITTMANN: Books written mostly by the professors, or by other English or American scholars.

SMITH: So you might read Charles Rufus Morey or Frank Mather.

WITTMANN: Frank Mather, yes. Also, Wilenski had just written a good history of French painting.

SMITH: [Henri] Focillon was at Yale already at this time.

WITTMANN: Yes, he must have been, but he played no part in my life. I knew his name, but I knew it better when I returned as a graduate student; by that time Harvard had become more international in its approach to art.

SMITH: What was the topic of your undergraduate thesis?

WITTMANN: I never got around to finishing a thesis, but I wrote a published paper on Pieter Coeck van Aelst, a rather obscure Dutch artist.

SMITH: Being an editor at the *Harvard Crimson* must have also taken up a lot of your time.

WITTMANN: It took a lot of time.

SMITH: What exactly were your responsibilities there?

WITTMANN: Well, editor was a strange title; there were several editors. There was one editor general, responsible for the paper, then there were editors who wrote editorials. But I was the type of editor who once or twice a week edited all copy, decided on placement, wrote all headlines, read copy in type, and saw the paper off the press. I had been a reporter earlier. The articles were usually written in the afternoon and turned in to the editor. It was most like being a city editor of a newspaper. You edited the copy, sent it down to a linotype operator, who set it in hot type (type was put down on these big stone tables), and then you were responsible for fitting it into the pages, so you had to know enough about where you could cut a story and be able to read it upside down in order to know where to cut. Writing headlines was not easy because you only had so many letters to a column. Then you had to cut the story to fit the space. The ads had already been placed, so you knew you had maybe eight inches for this story on a football game, and you had to cut it down to six, or maybe you could expand it over into the next column and make it eighteen inches. So, yes, it took a lot of time.

SMITH: Were you an arts-related editor?

WITTMANN: I wrote on art and I wrote on the theater. I was interested in the theater and I reviewed many Broadway plays which opened in Boston at that

time.

SMITH: Did you take any theater classes yourself?

WITTMANN: No. The other extra-curricular activity in which I participated was the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art. It was started about 1929 or 1930 by three undergraduates at Harvard, who thought that there ought to be a place to exhibit contemporary art. The three were Lincoln Kirstein, Eddy Warburg, and Johnny Walker. Lincoln was, of course, an extraordinary brilliant man, founder of a literary magazine, *Hound and Horn*, later founder of the New York City Ballet. He was independently wealthy from his family's department store, Filene's of Boston. Eddy Warburg was a member of the banking family in New York. And Johnny Walker, the third member, became a great art historian who studied later with [Bernard] Berenson at I Tatti in Florence, and later became a curator and director of the National Gallery of Art.

These three undergraduates rented space for a gallery on the second floor over the Harvard Trust Company in Harvard Square. Money was raised to support the gallery's activities from interested patrons in Boston and mostly New York. Paul Sachs contributed, as did Forbes. There were contributions from a group in New York which was later to found the Museum of Modern Art. During the academic year exhibitions were held in the gallery. A secretary managed the gallery.

The gallery really introduced Boston to such names as Picasso and Matisse, Calder and others. In those days the *Boston Transcript* couldn't wait to write unfavorable reviews of any kind of modern art. However these young men were determined to show contemporary art. They enlisted "Sandy" [Alexander] Calder to help design the gallery. He designed the light fixtures; they were simply aluminum cones which hung from the ceiling. He made those at the same time he was making the fascinating wire figures that became the Calder circus. Buckminster Fuller, who was later to design the Dymaxion House, designed a large aluminum table for the center of the gallery. [Isamu] Noguchi also participated. These three young artists were attracted to this new gallery; they just volunteered their services. I used to go and see all the exhibitions because I was fascinated with contemporary arts, which could not be seen elsewhere in Boston or Cambridge. The Fogg never showed anything like that. I wrote enthusiastic reviews of the exhibitions for the *Harvard Crimson*.

SMITH: You don't seem to be a person who has had much involvement with modern art in your professional career.

WITTMANN: No, but I learned something about it there. I saw it for the first time and I was just fascinated by it. But I'll talk more later about its place in my professional career.

Then the time came when Kirstein, Walker, and Warburg graduated.

They graduated in 1931, I think, and Lincoln somehow came to me and said, "Would you take over the gallery? We don't want to see it stop."

SMITH: How well had you known them?

WITTMANN: Not too well. I don't really know now how it was that Lincoln thought of me. I just don't remember. At any rate he did, and he said, "We're all leaving, we're graduating." I said, "Lincoln, I'd love to do it, I'm very much interested in it, but I don't have money myself. Where would funds come to operate the gallery? I couldn't use the money that you've used." He said, "All you do is write a letter to the same people who have contributed in the past and they'll give you the money." I could hardly believe that, but I did, and indeed money from the same sources did come. Perry Rathbone, my good friend and roommate, joined me in the operation. He later became the director of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and before that the St. Louis Art Museum.

So Perry and I, and a third classmate, Robert Evans, became the new officers of the Harvard Society of Contemporary Art. We were a triumvirate that succeeded the first triumvirate. We then began to organize exhibitions. The secretary stayed on, we kept the space over the Harvard Trust Company, and we had a series of exhibits during the school year. We had the first exhibit of surrealism that had ever been held in Boston. Surrealism was then a new, little known movement in art, but it was already established in Paris and it was known

in New York. The exhibition was successful and it was criticized unfavorably by the Boston newspapers.

SMITH: So who were the painters that were exhibited in that show?

WITTMANN: All the good painters that you might expect: Salvador Dalí, Max Ernst, and about a dozen others.

SMITH: How did you get the paintings?

WITTMANN: At that time there was one very good dealer in New York, Julien Levy, who was specializing in surrealism. We asked for his cooperation on lending art and suggesting private collectors who might lend. He was very helpful.

SMITH: What about other exhibits?

WITTMANN: We did an exhibit of stage sets, partly because I was interested in it and partly because Perry Rathbone had an uncle who was a stage designer, Donald Oenslager. Oenslager did the sets for most of the great plays and musicals of that day. He had a lot of his own drawings for sets, and of course he knew everybody in the field, so we worked closely with him. Oenslager helped us produce a perfectly beautiful and interesting first-time exhibit of stage sets. Then we produced an exhibition of American contemporary art.

SMITH: At that time American Scene was dominant, but then there was also abstraction.

WITTMANN: Well, this was really before the serious abstractions had begun; that was much later, but the American Scene was important. Some of the American Scene painters became quite abstract, like [Stuart] Davis; and [Charles] Sheeler's forms became very abstract and cubist in nature. They were good shows—and popular. These exhibitions did give people a chance to see some contemporary American art. The only contemporary American art that was being shown in Boston was work by very conservative portrait painters, shown in some of those "in town" Boston galleries; that was about all they showed, and it was all the *Transcript* would review.

When we graduated, in 1933, I persuaded John Coolidge, who was a brilliant young undergraduate then, to take over the gallery, and it didn't last very long; it lasted for about another year or maybe a half year. Lincoln Kirstein was the originator and real mover in the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art.

SMITH: At the time, as an undergraduate, what were your general tastes in music and literature? Did you consider yourself a "modern?"

WITTMANN: Yes, I was interested in the modern. I was reading *Ulysses*, Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and several of the literary magazines like Kirstein's *Hound and Horn*. T. S. Eliot was at Harvard during my junior year, and I listened to some of his evening open houses at Eliot House.

I was not very knowledgeable of music. Although I was interested in

modern literature and modern art, I didn't know much about modern music. I knew of John Cage, but I didn't really understand his music—not sure I do now.

SMITH: Were you interested in psychoanalysis at the time?

WITTMANN: No, not at all.

SMITH: Did you know Chick [A. Everett] Austin?

WITTMANN: He had already graduated, but he was one of the museum directors that Paul Sachs used to discuss. When I was in Harvard he had already become director of the Wadsworth Athenaeum and was beginning to buy extraordinary works of art—baroque art—which no one in this country was acquiring. I don't think the Wadsworth Athenaeum's visitors understood his discoveries at that time, but a few, like Paul Sachs, did appreciate his brilliant purchases. It was Austin who brought Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts* to the Wadsworth for its first performance.

Later on in life he moved to Sarasota, Florida, and took over, wisely enough, the Ringling Museum, which Paul Sachs used to talk to us about in his museum class. He'd say, "Young men, do you realize that John Ringling, the circus owner, was a very intelligent man? He knew enough to buy great works of art that were too big for anyone else." Sachs's students said, "He's just a circus man and he bought big works of art because he thought big," but Sachs said he didn't buy them because they were big, he bought them because they

were great works of art. He said, "You go down and look at that Ringling Museum. There are great works of art there, and someday you'll realize it." Well, now we all do. They were baroque paintings, big paintings you know, big as a wall, that he bought for practically nothing. Now we know about baroque art, we know who these artists were; we hardly knew it in those days, but Paul Sachs knew.

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[Tape III, Side One]

SMITH: I want to talk now about your own views. In terms of broader cultural considerations, would you say you had a skeptical attitude toward tradition and authority?

WITTMANN: Not exactly, no. I must have had an unconscious hunger for something more than what I was getting out of those courses in traditional art at Harvard.

SMITH: So you wanted to preserve what you had from the past but—

WITTMANN: Yes, it wasn't an adversarial position. I wasn't opposed to traditional art. I simply wanted to add to it.

SMITH: What about the relationship of science and the humanities, did you feel that you had something to learn from the scientific viewpoint?

WITTMANN: No, I don't think I was intelligent enough to know much about the sciences in those days. My mind doesn't work very well in science, and I don't think I really thought about art in those terms at all. My aims were focused a little more sharply on—or limited to, I would say—art history and its relation to my own period. There's much to be said for the place of art within the social structure; it's a part of it. People were as they were in the fifteenth century because of their social relationships; their art reflects this, and it can't help but do

so. However, our courses never dealt with these relationships, and I only came to this realization later on. The whole method of teaching has changed now.

SMITH: There was something in the short interview you did with Thomas [Carr] Howe. You mentioned the Ben Shahn exhibition at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art. You didn't discuss it in any great detail, but you did say that it was very important for your later attitudes about freedom of speech.

WITTMANN: In looking for exhibitions of American art to show at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, I saw in New York an exhibition of a young artist at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery, Ben Shahn. The exhibit I saw was a series of paintings related to the Sacco-Vanzetti case. We decided to present the exhibition at the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art because of the quality and originality of the paintings. I have to say that I was not knowledgeable enough to know exactly what the Sacco-Vanzetti case was, nor how concerned with the judicial and political life of Boston it was, but of course I later learned that Sacco and Vanzetti had been judged by three prominent Bostonians. One of the three was A. Lawrence Lowell, who at that time was in his last year as president of Harvard University. The notorious case had taken place before I went to Harvard. I knew nothing of it—or very little. I did like Shahn's art.

Well, I didn't realize what a whirlwind of trouble this would bring, but in Boston at that time the Sacco-Vanzetti case was still very much alive in people's

minds, still very controversial, and still very political. Harvard undergraduates were interested in the show and came in great numbers to see it and liked the art of Ben Shahn, and liked the idea of the show, but I'm afraid the paintings were a kind of a parody of the three great Bostonians who had sat in judgment. There was finally enough controversy that the Harvard campus police took down posters advertising the exhibition and threatened to close the gallery. Some even felt that there were grounds to dismiss us from college. At that point, A. Lawrence Lowell, the president of Harvard, spoke out. He said, "No. People have the right to say what they feel. I would be the last to stand in the way of the students. The exhibition doesn't offend me. Ben Shahn is a serious artist, who created these pictures to show a certain point of view, and I for one would never dismiss these students. I feel this is not the thing to do." This statement, which I have paraphrased here, came from a man whose roots went back into New England history—the Lowell family was an old and distinguished family. Lowell was ending his long career as president of Harvard, and he stood for what I thought then and I still feel was a proper right of freedom of speech. He was perfectly clear. He turned the corner on the thing, everyone quieted down, the exhibition continued until its end, and nothing more was made of it.

There's a slight postscript to this. In later years, when Ben Shahn was an established artist, by this time in his sixties I believe, he was invited by Harvard

to spend a year as the artist/professor-in-residence. He gave a series of lectures that year about his career and about his art. Within my own lifetime things had greatly changed. What Lowell stood for had come around. This young artist who we introduced to Harvard became a respected artist in residence invited to give a series of lectures on his own art.

I think A. Lawrence Lowell had a great effect on me—more than I realized at the time. At a freshman assembly, President Lowell spoke. He said, "Young men, look around you. Do you see all these handsome brick buildings? Some of them are dormitories in which you live, some are classroom buildings. You believe this is Harvard College, but it's not really Harvard College. What Harvard College is, is the library. If we didn't have books we would never have education, and if we didn't have books we wouldn't have a college. Books are the first things you have to have. Why do you think this is called Harvard College? Because of the young Englishman named John Harvard who came to this country and settled in Cambridge for a while and gave his library—the college was named after him. So don't ever forget the importance of books, and don't forget the importance of the library; it's much more important than having buildings. You can destroy the buildings, but if you don't have books you have no education, you have no background." Well, this was a wonderful statement, and one which we could all bear in mind. Much later, when I was a trustee and

adviser to the Getty Trust, I was a strong advocate of developing a large art reference library there. Now at the Getty we have a library of almost 800,000 volumes, all on the history of art, which supplements the great libraries of UCLA.

SMITH: This is jumping ahead a little bit, but I wanted to ask you to what degree—for instance in your years at the Toledo Museum of Art—did you have to struggle for this principle of free expression? Were there challenges? For instance, I know that in the McCarthy period the paintings of both Picasso and Jackson Pollock were removed from the Los Angeles County Museum [of Art] because of the artists' imputed political beliefs.

WITTMANN: We never had that problem in Toledo. Probably because of the strong and continuing support of the respected trustees, who were business leaders in the community who considered the museum an asset to the community and felt that they stood in the position of supporting the museum and holding it in trust for the community.

SMITH: I'd like to get back to the main topic for today, which was your coming back to Harvard for your graduate studies and taking the museum course. Did you go back to earn an M.A. degree?

WITTMANN: No, I just wanted to take the course. In fact, Paul Sachs said, "If you work for me in order to take the museum course, I'll help you. I can't offer

you a degree because in order to get a degree you have to enroll in the university and then you'd have to pay your tuition. What I can do is employ you as my assistant." There was one other aspect that I didn't mention before and that was that I told Sachs I had to have some money to live on, and he said, "All right, I'll get you a teaching job." So I taught art history at the Emerson School in Boston, a two-year college for young women who were preparing for a business career. It was the first time I had taught seriously. It was a course that met twice a week I think.

SMITH: Was that a general survey course?

WITTMANN: General survey of history of art, yes.

SMITH: For people who you had to assume knew nothing about art?

WITTMANN: They didn't know very much about art, no. They had to take this course—it was compulsory—and they were taking English courses and other courses to give them some kind of background before they went into business or whatever they did. But it only bears on my future because after the year at Harvard I then went into museum work, and I also taught, but I'll talk about that later. So, you want to go back to the—

SMITH: The museum course. I know at the Getty archives there are the class notes for Paul Sachs's class—

WITTMANN: Are there?

SMITH: —from the mid-twenties to whenever he stopped teaching it, but I'd like to get your impression, what you remember as the key elements. What was most important to you at the time and later as you have reflected back on that experience?

WITTMANN: Well, it was a great experience, I'm very glad I did it, and the fact that I didn't get a degree out of it didn't seem to make very much difference. Today I think it would have made a great difference, because almost everybody in our field goes for the Ph.D.; in my day they didn't, it didn't matter very much. At any rate, it was a class that met all afternoon on Fridays, as I remember—once a week, all afternoon, one to five. We met in the Naumburg Room at the Fogg Museum, sitting around a big table. The class was limited to only thirteen or fourteen students. Usually when we walked into the room there would be several objects on the table. Paul Sachs's method of teaching was much less structured than that course in French art that he taught, which I talked about earlier. He began by talking about any subject he felt was appropriate for that day. It might be drawings—that's where we got those stories about the collecting of art during World War I that I mentioned earlier. He would talk a lot about himself and how he collected, what he did, and why. At some point he usually said, "I'm going to ask you a question, and I don't care whether your answer is right or wrong, but I want to know why you say it. I'm interested in

your opinion." What he was trying to do was to develop a sense of connoisseurship.

So sooner or later he'd get around to the objects that he'd put on the table. Of course, as I told you, Harvard was not teaching the decorative arts at all, so these objects might be ceramic plates, they might be bronze objects, a painting or drawing. Often we had no real experience with these objects. The only way we could have known about them was by looking at objects in museums. Sachs would say, "Mr. Wittmann, why do you think that's a good object? Do you like it or don't you, and what do you think it is? Do you think it's real, or do you think it's a fake?" He always had some forgeries mixed in with these objects. I'd say I didn't know much about bronze sculpture, but I liked it and I thought it was genuine. He'd ask me why I thought it was genuine, and I would say, "Well, I think the surface is interesting and somebody must have taken a lot of pains with it. I don't really know too much how bronzes are made, but it looks as though it's well finished and beautifully made. I just don't think anyone would take that much trouble if he were making a forgery."

Well, soon it emerged that certainly forgers took a lot of pains with what they did and things could easily turn out to be forgeries that were very beautifully made. There might be a plate on the table and Sachs would ask what you thought of that plate and where you thought it came from, and you'd say, "Well,

it looks Oriental to me but I don't know enough about Oriental ceramics to know where it's from. I don't think it's Chinese because I've looked at a lot of Chinese art. It looks like it might be from the Near East or from Persia or something like that but I don't really know enough to say." And Sachs would ask, "Do you think it's real or do you think it's something that was made in the twentieth century—how old is it?" You'd say, "I think it's old but I don't know because I don't know the structure of the age of a piece of Near Eastern ceramic. I don't know whether it's fifteenth century or seventeenth century, but I don't think it's modern. I don't think it's a forgery." And then of course Sachs would ask you why you didn't think it was a forgery. He would then turn to somebody else, and he wouldn't give the answer to anybody until he went around the table, and people had a chance to express different opinions. You found in this group that some of them knew quite a bit. They would say, "Oh, I know that, it's like one my mother had and it's Persian seventeenth century." Maybe he was right, or maybe it turned out to be forgery too!

Almost all the others in the course had just graduated from college and were taking the course in the first year of graduate study. I of course had already had four years in a museum and therefore had a much broader background in looking at objects and knowing about objects, so it was easier for me to do this. Sachs often turned to me and said, "Well now, Mr. Wittmann,

you have been in a museum for four years, what do you think of it?" He would put me on the spot in that way. But at any rate those four years of experience I found were invaluable because I had learned a lot at the Nelson Gallery.

SMITH: To what degree were you involved in acquisitions?

WITTMANN: At the Nelson Gallery? No way at all at that time. I was just learning—learning by doing.

SMITH: But they would acquire things and then bring it in and they would explain why they thought it was wonderful.

WITTMANN: Oh, yes. I haven't talked about some aspects of the Nelson Gallery experience, and perhaps I should as it had a real bearing on my later career. But to return to Paul Sachs. Sometimes he'd talk about museums and how museums began and why they were so important. He was placing his graduate students in museums all the time, and most of us were looking forward to a career in museums. That was part of what he talked about. He often would talk about great collectors he had known. He made every effort to meet and talk to collectors. He also talked about art dealers. It was the first time we ever heard anything positive about art dealers because as undergraduates we were always told that art dealers were often unscrupulous and couldn't be trusted. But Sachs knew the other side because he dealt with them. He bought art through art dealers and he knew that some of them were quite good business people and very

honest indeed.

Also, he insisted that the museum class put on an exhibit during the year. We could have a space in the Fogg Museum where we'd have this exhibit, and we had to get together and decide what we wanted to do. So we decided we'd do something called *The Horse in Art*. Well, it was sort of a stupid subject, but we did it anyway . . . *The Horse in Art*. The object of course was to learn how to do an exhibit. By that time I knew something about it so the class made me chairman. We had to look through books and catalogs and find out who owned good pictures that had horses in them and who might possibly lend to us, and then we had to write letters and ask to borrow them. We had to learn about how you insured these things, how you arranged for shipping them, and how far you could go with expenses, because we were given a very small budget. We did a little catalog, and everybody had his own idea about what to say in the catalog, so we had to solve that somehow. Sachs stayed out of it, and finally the show took place.

To this day I really can't remember much about the contents of it except for a beautiful drawing of a man on horseback by Leonardo da Vinci, owned by John Nicholas Brown. John Nicholas Brown was a great collector in Rhode Island, and of course he was the father of [J.] Carter Brown, who later grew up to be Director of the National Gallery. But John Nicholas Brown was a great

man in his own right. He'd been secretary of the navy and a great public figure. He had a wonderful collection, and we hesitated to ask him for this drawing, but we thought it was the most beautiful drawing we could get, and he, being a loyal Harvard man among other things, responded and said of course we could borrow it. It was a very valuable drawing and we had to insure it—or maybe he took care of it, I don't remember, but we got the drawing.

SMITH: Did you go pick it up, or was it shipped?

WITTMANN: I think we picked it up. It was just down in Rhode Island. I still remember to this day the beauty of that drawing. I don't know where it is now, but I rather suspect it's in the National Gallery—if not, it belongs to Carter Brown by this time. It was the only drawing of a horse that John Nicholas Brown owned.

SMITH: You had been involved in mounting exhibitions at the Nelson, right?

WITTMANN: I knew a little bit about it, so that's why they made me chairman of it.

SMITH: Was there anything for you that was new in terms of putting on this—

WITTMANN: Yes, the problem of working with a group of my peers who all had their own ideas about what to do. It was a usual brilliant mixture of people in the class. One eventually became head of Abbott Academy, the female division of Andover. She always loved art, but she was really a teacher, and a

great intellectual person. One became a professor at Harvard and a writer of books on mannerism. Others went on to other careers, and some of them never continued in the art field. It isn't very easy to a get a group of disparate people to agree on anything.

SMITH: How typical is that of the museum environment?

WITTMANN: I think when you get out into the museum world, where everybody has a job and is paid for doing the job, there is a greater incentive to work together because you have to get along with your fellow colleagues. I insisted on that at Toledo always. We had curatorial meetings and made plans together, but it's easier when you're in a responsible, paid position.

SMITH: What about the class trips?

WITTMANN: The class trips I organized with Paul Sachs's efficient secretary, who helped me with booking transportation and hotels. I remember there was one trip to Philadelphia in the wintertime to see the [Joseph Early] Widener collection, later given to the National Gallery in Washington. Mr. Widener was a Philadelphian who collected art, as had his father. The house was in a suburb of Philadelphia. It was a large house; and the first time I had seen a real gallery for art attached to a house. It was one of the great private collections.

SMITH: Is this the same Widener as Widener Library?

WITTMANN: Same family, but I'm not sure if it was the same man. I'm not

sure just how the relationship goes there. We were offered lunch in this regal dining room, beautifully set for us. Widener's house staff was sent up from Florida for our lunch. It was beyond our expectations to have one footman behind each chair, wearing white gloves and dressed in the livery of service. It was very special for us all and we never forgot it, of course. Years later, the collection was given to the National Gallery and is there now. Andrew Mellon had a great deal to do with getting the collection for the National Gallery, but it was a loss to Philadelphia.

SMITH: Did you go to the [Albert] Barnes [Collection]?

WITTMANN: No, because Barnes was living at that time and wouldn't knowingly admit university art history professors or students. So Paul Sachs of course had no entry, nor did his students. We were, however, well received at the Philadelphia Museum.

SMITH: You were saying your museum class also went to New York.

WITTMANN: Yes, we went to New York to see some private collections. Among others I remember the Robert Lehman collection, which was later given to the Metropolitan Museum, but at that time was still in Lehman's house. Later, we visited several art dealers with Paul Sachs. Among the dealers we visited was Lord Duveen in his palatial building, then on Fifth Avenue. I remember the rich red plush walls of the galleries, old master paintings shown one at a time and

discussed by Duveen. I remember our meetings back in Cambridge afterward, when we talked about the works of art we had seen: "Which ones were genuine, young men? Which ones do you think weren't genuine? Which were not what Lord Duveen said they were?" And then we would have lively discussions: was this really by such and such an artist or was it not?

SMITH: Well, that raises a question to me. How one can make an informed judgment about a period that you don't have particular expertise in? I know that this is part of the pedagogical process, but do you need to do that kind of research into seventeenth-century Persian ceramics or sixteenth-century Italian painting?

WITTMANN: Well, now of course you would, you'd have to if you were seriously interested in buying the object, and today, all of us spend a great deal of time and research through various scientific methods finding out all we can about an object before we buy it. But in the days I'm talking about, little of this occurred, even when you were buying works of art. The scientific tools weren't available. I think Paul Sachs was trying to get us to understand that there was a difference between the creative process and the reproductive process; he used to talk a lot about this. He used to point out that an imitation is never like an original creation; it is always rather pedestrian because the forger is constantly thinking about the original. He tries to make it different but nevertheless like the

original, and therefore there's no creativity there—there's no life to it. And Sachs said that that was why most forgeries, after a few decades, become very obvious.

Another point that Sachs made: if you are in a position to buy art in your museum career and are any good at all, you're going to make a mistake and buy a fake sooner or later. We sort of gasped and said, "What do you mean by that, sir?" He replied, "Well, if you don't, if you just buy the very safe things where there is no doubt about authenticity, they may be genuine, but you will form a pretty dull collection in the end. However, if you are more adventurous and go for the object or painting that looks absolutely marvelous to you, you may get a marvelous object which may indeed be a fake. If you don't buy a fake in your lifetime you're not very good, you're not very creative. I've bought fakes, so probably you will too, someday." And we thought, "Oh, maybe we won't," but of course everyone does.

Another point he made, which I believe is very true, was that a forgery made by your contemporary is very hard to discover because it has an element of your own lifetime in it. If the forger today tries to make a Renaissance sculpture, or even a Greek sculpture, it's never really purely fifth-century Greek or it's never really fifteenth-century Italian; it always has a little bit of the twentieth century in it—your own lifetime. It's not very apparent to you because

you live in the same time. But if you look at a forgery that was made fifty years ago or a hundred years ago, you are less likely to be deceived because it looks like the period in which it was made; it looks like art nouveau or art deco. Sachs said, "You're not easily deceived by a forgery made a hundred years ago, but you may well be deceived by a forgery made two years ago."

[Alcea] Dossena was one of the famous Italian forgers of the early part of the twentieth century. His forgeries, which in their day were acquired by many museums as Renaissance sculptures, don't look like Renaissance sculptures any more; they look like exactly what they are—early twentieth-century art that's made to look like it's Renaissance. Of course, our methods of examining art now are very different. We routinely make use of various scientific tests and much more careful research. However, we can still be deceived!

SMITH: There's the case of the Getty kouros . . . the experts can't agree.

WITTMANN: No one can agree on it. I don't like the kouros, I never did like it. The day it came into the building I thought it was wrong. But the scientists have made extensive tests and still feel that it is impossible to create a surface like that of the kouros except through age—no other way you can create that surface—and yet I consider it a very strange surface.

[Tape III, Side Two]

WITTMANN: Perhaps this is a good example of what we were taught by Paul

Sachs. He said, "Use your eyes. Your eye is the important thing. You must not only think about whether it's original or whether it isn't, but is it a good or superior example by an artist or a poor example? Artists are human. They have their good days and their bad days, and what you don't want to do is buy a second-rate work by a well-known artist. It's much better to buy a splendid picture by a lesser-known artist." So the confrontation between the scientist and the museum curator still continues in some cases. One day perhaps the kouros problem will be solved, but maybe it'll never be proved one way or the other.

SMITH: That's a complicated case. I guess part of it is, they're not sure whether it might be a Roman imitation as opposed to—

WITTMANN: Well, in this case I don't think it's even a Roman imitation. I think it's a modern imitation.

SMITH: That's your opinion?

WITTMANN: That's my opinion. I don't see how it could be a Roman imitation, and I don't think it's Greek. Anyway, I've never said this before. I don't say it publicly because of my respect for the Getty Museum, its curators, and its scientists. Perhaps the scientists are right. Who am I to say they're wrong? I can't prove anything.

SMITH: But your opinion is based on your experience and your eye.

WITTMANN: That's right. That's mostly what my experience was based on.

I'll listen to the scientists, but I don't always believe them, because science can also change and develop.

SMITH: I would like to ask you about Wilhelm Koehler and Jakob Rosenberg. You had mentioned that both of them had been important to you during that period.

WITTMANN: I not only took the museum course, but I took other courses there. I audited the courses of both Koehler and Rosenberg, who were brilliant men. I really learned a great deal from them both because a whole new point of view had come into Harvard since I had been there as an undergraduate. These brilliant professors who had come from Europe brought with them a new European way of looking at works of art. Both were interested in later European art, in the baroque period. Rosenberg was a great authority on Rembrandt, for instance. So far as I remember, no one taught anything about Rembrandt in my undergraduate days.

SMITH: Rembrandt was not already a cultural icon?

WITTMANN: An icon certainly, always, but not taught. There was still this nineteenth-century tradition of Italian Renaissance art at Harvard. But at any rate, Koehler was a great expert in all European art and was just as interested in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century art as he was in the earlier art, but mostly this had to do with northern Europe as opposed to Italy. Koehler also

discussed theories, what art was and how it was created and why it changed. He discussed the political and social implications of art. He was a spellbinder as a speaker, so he always attracted very large classes—a very wonderful man.

Rosenberg was a much quieter man but a great teacher also. He could spend a whole lecture period just talking about one Rembrandt painting. He would explore every aspect of the artist and why he created a specific picture, what it meant and its relationship with life in seventeenth-century Holland. Rosenberg was just a brilliant speaker. His approach to art was fascinating to me. It was so different from the earlier Harvard undergraduate approach where art history was often facts and figures, and remembering, and numbers, and not much thought about what it really meant. Koehler and Rosenberg were talking about what art meant, art values, and art in relationship to the period in which it was created. Rosenberg was also a print expert and had been head of the print department at the Berlin Museum. There was a large department of prints at Harvard in the Fogg, and he was placed in charge. He also taught a course in the history of prints. Those two men really affected me greatly. I was very fortunate to be able to take their courses, because it helped me a to change my viewpoint on looking at art.

SMITH: Did you get to know them personally?

WITTMANN: Yes, I did, both of them. Rosenberg more than Koehler.

Rosenberg was a very approachable man, and he got to know his students. I got along well with him because he knew I had already had museum experience. He was a real museum man and had been in the Berlin Museum before leaving Germany because of Hitler. Koehler was more of an academic, whereas Rosenberg came out of the great museum tradition of Germany.

SMITH: Germany had a tradition of the museum curator as a scholar, which I think did not exist in the United States, really.

WITTMANN: It didn't until later on. It was beginning to develop, but it hadn't gotten very far yet.

SMITH: Did that impress itself upon you, that as a museum person you would also be a scholar? Was that part of your goals?

WITTMANN: Yes. I should know more than I did, but I didn't know when I would ever have a chance to study more. When we discuss my career at Toledo, you will find that I spent a lot of time talking and listening to dealers because I felt that they had gained much knowledge from experience. Jakob Rosenberg, with whom I studied at Harvard, was the brother of [Samuel] Rosenberg, who was a partner in the art dealing firm of Rosenberg and Stiebel in New York. They left Germany and went to Holland before settling in New York just before the end of World War II. They soon became leading art dealers in decorative arts and paintings. There was a third Rosenberg brother who remained in Europe

and bought works of art for the New York firm. I got to know Sammy Rosenberg pretty well when he learned of my interest in quality.

SMITH: One last thing on Harvard. Did you know Agnes Mongan?

WITTMANN: Yes, I haven't mentioned her, have I? Agnes was sort of the "patron saint" of all of us, in a way. Even as undergraduates we knew Agnes Mongan. As a very young woman Agnes became curator of Paul Sachs's collection of drawings. As his collection grew, she grew. She became curator of drawings at the Fogg. She wrote that museum's catalog of drawings. She is a quite wonderful person. Everyone loved her and she became a good friend to all of us. She was older than we were and she never married. She was the bridge between Paul Sachs and the professional staff at the Fogg and many undergraduate and graduate students. Agnes was a great scholar; she was one of the first really great scholars who considered scholarship and catalog writing to be very important, and she continued to be a good friend. I have kept in touch with her always. She's not very well now, but she still lives in Cambridge and still has her office at the Fogg. She was universally admired. I never took a course from her, although I think she did teach a course in drawings. She had developed her eye, so she knew exactly what was right.

SMITH: This question of the concept of "the eye" is something we're going to have to keep coming back to.

WITTMANN: Well, it's important to come back to because it's a way of looking at art works which not everyone agrees with anymore. Many in the academic world believe there isn't such a thing as connoisseurship, and nothing such as an eye. I still am old enough and old-fashioned enough to believe that the eye is important. Some scholars believe that a work of art is only important as a piece of history, or as it fits in with the life of the times when it was created. They may feel that it doesn't make any difference whether you look at an original or whether you look at a slide or a photograph of it—it's all the same. It's the image that counts as a visual expression of the time in which it was created. Certainly a work of art is an image, but more than that it's a beautiful object, made with skill and creativity. A ceramic or a bronze can be a great work of art, done by what we used to call a craftsman. I believe a craftsman can also be an artist. I also believe that a great artist can paint an inferior picture. Some scholars would feel that whether it's good or bad art it's part of the history of the times.

In buying art for the museum, the quality, vitality, and creativity of the art must be of first consideration. It is more than just an illustration. For example, I once saw at a reputable dealer a big, buxom, half-length female figure, supposedly of Juno, which I felt was a mediocre but genuine Rembrandt. I didn't even offer it to the Toledo Museum of Art. Later on, a well-known collector

bought it and touted it as a great work of art. It was indeed a genuine Rembrandt of great size. Certainly it's an image of its period, but to me it is hardly a great work of art. It is a pedestrian painting by a great artist, done on an "off" day. All artists, being human, paint unevenly. A name is not enough.

SMITH: Did you have pressure from, in that case, your trustees, or people saying, "We should have more Rembrandts in our museum"?

WITTMANN: No, our trustees never did that. One of the things we'll see when we discuss the Toledo Museum is that they allowed me to buy pictures by forgotten artists who had been famous in their day. I've lived long enough to see them come back to fame. But when I bought them we paid very little for them. I was able to buy some extraordinary paintings for Toledo simply because I was willing to, as Sachs said, stick my neck out and take a chance. Our trustees always backed me up. They didn't say, "Buy more Rembrandts," or "Buy more Leonardo da Vincis"—they knew we couldn't do that—we didn't have that kind of money. As a result, the reputation the museum has, and I may have as its director, came about only after the importance of these carefully chosen works of art was recognized. When I bought them many were little known.

SMITH: Let's go back to the Nelson Gallery of Art and then your going to the Hyde Collection.

WITTMANN: As I have already mentioned, I began at the Nelson Gallery

before it was opened. The gallery opened at the end of 1933. I became curator of prints at that time; it was kind of an empty title. We had a pretty good collection of prints, but it wasn't very big. I also became the registrar of the museum, the person that keeps track of all the works of art. So I had an office by that time and a secretary and was gaining a little knowledge, but I did everything else because it was such a small staff there. Our staff was all pretty young, except for Paul Gardner, who was the director, so we all were learning and we all pitched in and did everything. We hung exhibits and we lectured in the galleries. I remember the first time Paul Gardner came into my office and said, "I want you to go upstairs and talk to a group of visitors about the collection." I said, "I've never talked to a group before." He said, "That's all right, you've got to start sometime." So off I went and talked to this group. Poor group! I don't know what they thought, but I hope they got something out of it. I was not a lecturer. I had no experience talking to museum visitors. Anyway, I did that, and I did help Paul Gardner arrange exhibits. I got to know him pretty well. He was very helpful in many ways and became really quite good about all of us younger people, seeing that we got experience in various fields, so it was a good experience.

The Nelson Gallery has always had only three trustees. None was an art expert, so they employed an adviser used by the Cleveland Museum of Art to

search for art works for them to acquire.

SMITH: Why did they go to Cleveland?

WITTMANN: Well, it was one of the big, well-established older museums in that area.

SMITH: Was [William] Millikan director at this time?

WITTMANN: Yes. The adviser was Harold Woodbury Parsons. He was a fairly wealthy Bostonian, self-educated, went to Harvard, who traveled frequently in Europe, found works of art, and negotiated for them for various museums in our country. He had a loose arrangement with several museums, but he had a very close paid arrangement with Cleveland, and he developed one with Kansas City. That meant that Harold Woodbury Parsons would come to Kansas City at irregular intervals, talk only to the trustees, and recommend that they buy certain European pictures from certain dealers, and the question always was, was he paid by the dealers also. He received a retainer fee from the Nelson Gallery and there were always rumors of payments from his sources, but these rumors were never substantiated.

He had a great interest in young beginning museum staff. When he came to Kansas City to meet with the trustees, he also took time to meet all of us, to talk to us, and to encourage us in our museum careers. He would tell the trustees, "You have some very good young people working for you. They need

more chance to travel. You should give them enough money to visit other museums." He did this for me and I was able to go to the Cleveland Museum, which was having a great anniversary exhibition at the time. He said, "Wittmann ought to have a chance to go there and learn how a great museum runs." On that trip I met William Millikan, who later became a good friend. Parsons did kind things like that, but he was a divisive element in the museum because Paul Gardner, the director, had nothing to say about what was bought, strangely enough. Of course he resented this terribly, and he resented Parsons because of it. He resented the trustees not allowing him to travel and buy art.

The second thing that happened was that the Nelson Gallery trustees heard someplace—I guess in Cleveland again—about a man who would advise them on Oriental art. Well, they hadn't even thought about collecting Oriental art, but the man turned out to be Langdon Warner, the professor at Harvard I have mentioned, who I greatly admired. Langdon Warner became a second paid adviser for Oriental art to the trustees at Kansas City. He didn't recommend buying anything particularly, but he said, "I have a young student who has just graduated from Harvard. He's studying the Chinese language, and he's gone off to Peking to study at the Harvard Yenching Institute. His name is Laurence Sickman. I think if you would send him a couple of thousand dollars you might be surprised at the things he would send back to you from Peking." And he left

it at that.

So the trustees did that, and soon great boxes came from China, filled with beautiful objects, because this was just the time when Peking was the capital and center of intellectual life in China. Many European intellectuals lived or visited there. All the old wealth of China was flowing into Peking. China was building vast railway systems and developing in many ways. Many ancient tombs were uncovered and in the tombs were wonderful objects: ceramic figures, pottery, textiles, bronzes. These objects came to Peking, which was the center for art dealers. From there they would be sold to Europeans and Americans. The Japanese were also extensive buyers. Anything could be bought, everything was cheap. So this young man, Laurence Sickman, who had graduated from Harvard under the aegis of Langdon Warner—his mother had been a school teacher in Denver, Colorado and he had no background in art, only the Chinese language—began to buy for the Nelson Gallery. Fabulous ancient treasures appeared in Kansas City, so wonderful that Langdon would come and see them. He'd come and visit the Nelson Gallery and offer his advice to the trustees. "Send Larry a little more money, he can use it," he said. "You're paying hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy European paintings. If you just send a few thousand dollars to Larry you'll be surprised what wonderful things come to you." More and more money was allocated.

When Larry Sickman came home from China to visit the museum to tell us about these exotic objects, which we had simply unpacked and put in storage, he said, "You know, I'm going back to Peking because I haven't finished my studies, but someday I'll come back and be with you in the museum and become a curator for you." He was a very attractive person, we all liked him very much—he was just a few years older than we were. So back he went, the trustees gave him more money, and more and more treasures came. This was long before exporting art was considered looting. There were no Chinese or United States laws against export or import of this art. These great Chinese objects were a revelation to me, as I'd never seen Oriental art, except what Langdon Warner had shown us in college. There were such things as complete unused bolts of eighteenth-century brocade that came out of tombs, and then great tomb figures from the Han dynasty, 200 B.C. to 200 A.D.

SMITH: So, as they were arriving you had really no idea what you were getting, you just dealt with the object as an object?

WITTMANN: We just unpacked the boxes and put away the contents. And gradually we began receiving bigger and bigger objects. Soon we began getting really important sculpture, big life-sized figures from Lung-Mên, and then we received an entire painted wall from a Chinese temple, an eighth-century A.D. frescoed wall. Then we got the rest of the temple. Then we received a large

seated wood figure, which must have been eight feet high, carved in the Sung dynasty, about 1400 A.D. We also received large boxes full of chips of black stone, and on the back of each piece of chipped stone—some of them as big as eighteen inches or so—was a painted number. Larry wrote, "Just put them away someplace and I'll take care of it when I get back, and don't remove the numbers. I've got the plan, I know what they are."

When Sickman eventually returned to Kansas City he explained that the black stones were the entire wall of a temple cut into a cave at Lung-Mên, one of the great temples that Langdon Warner had visited in China years ago. The Chinese themselves chipped out the wall in pieces and sold it in Peking. What Larry had was a plan of all these numbered pieces which the Chinese had given him. He built a big sandbox the size of the wall—it was about six inches deep and eight to ten feet square. He then put all these pieces face up in there so that he could see the entire composition. Then he turned over all the pieces with the numbers now on top. The back was then covered with plaster about six inches deep. Then the entire wall could be lifted and placed on the gallery wall.

This kind of destruction was carried out by the Chinese, who sold this valuable archaeological material to various Western collectors and museums. China exported extensively to dealers. Ching Tsai Loo was the greatest dealer in Oriental art in the west. He had beautiful galleries in London, Paris, and New

York. I never knew how old he was. He visited the Nelson Gallery occasionally, always smiling, always enigmatic—the most exotic of all the dealers. Export of Chinese art to the West ceased when the Japanese invaded China, before the start of World War II. They also were avid collectors of Chinese art and when they invaded China they took over all the art. The great days of Peking were over.

So Oriental art became a very significant part of the Nelson Gallery's collections. Although the Nelson Gallery spent much on European art and little on Oriental art, in the end, through Langdon Warner's recommendation of Larry Sickman, the Nelson Gallery developed the third greatest collection of Oriental art in America. When Larry returned to Kansas City before the war, he became the gallery's Oriental curator. He was such a dynamic, likeable personality that several important collectors in Oriental art established themselves there, and the city still is known for its collections of Chinese art, which Larry stimulated.

Larry then joined the army, as most did, in World War II. After the end of the war, he remained in the military government for some months. When he left the service, he returned to Kansas City and subsequently became the gallery's director. Paul Gardner had reached the age of retirement. Sickman further developed the great tradition of Oriental art in Kansas City. He became a significant scholar himself and wrote two of the three great books on China that

have been written since the war. After his retirement as director, he continued to write and was the acknowledged expert in two fields: Chinese paintings and Chinese furniture. He had a great private collection of Chinese furniture, which was very rare indeed—most of it is seventeenth and eighteenth century. He was one of the great figures in American museum life—a great scholar as well as a leader in his field, and a perceptive, knowledgeable curator.

SMITH: Were you at this time beginning to formulate your own ideas about how a museum ought to be run?

WITTMANN: I think I must have been, although I was in no position to be able to run a museum in those days. I made myself learn a great deal about Oriental art, and I did a lot with it later on. I still have a great love for it. When we discuss Toledo you will see that I bought Oriental art from this same C. T. Loo, who was closing his long career at that time. After Kansas City I went back to Harvard, which we have already discussed. After that year at Harvard I knew I wanted to return to a museum career. I didn't want to go back to Kansas City because I saw no opportunity to grow and advance, so I sought the advice of Dr. William Valentiner, then director of the Detroit Institute of Arts. He told me of the Hyde family in Glens Falls, New York. They had formed an excellent collection of old master paintings. Louis F. Hyde's widow wanted a young curator to prepare the collection to become a public museum. Dr. Valentiner

suggested that the position would provide a chance to grow and develop, and a chance to travel.

[Tape IV, Side One]

WITTMANN: At this time, almost everyone who went into museums had independent financial support. Most curators had private means to support themselves. Museum salaries were quite inadequate. Unfortunately I had no financial reserves and needed a salary to live on.

Dr. Valentiner volunteered to recommend me for this newly created position at the Hyde Collection. Glens Falls is a town about fifty miles north of Albany, near Saratoga Springs. It was a small town with two companies: the Glens Falls Insurance Company, and the Finch-Pruyn Paper Company. I went to see Mrs. Hyde, who told me that she and her late husband wished to establish a museum in their neo-Renaissance house in Great Falls. Although she lived in the house in the summertime, she also had a Park Avenue apartment where she lived in the winter. She liked New York and enjoyed the music and art. She explained that the collection had to date been formed with the advice of Wilhelm Valentiner. Some years before, the Metropolitan Museum had asked Mr. and Mrs. Hyde to bequeath the collection to the Metropolitan. Mr. Hyde had at that time stated, "No, my whole life has been in Glens Falls, New York, and our money all comes from there, and I think this collection that we're forming ought

to stay in Glens Falls." So that was how it was decided; Mrs. Hyde was simply carrying out his wishes, and she saw that the time had come to try to develop it as a museum.

Mr. Hyde's money came from the Finch-Pruyn Paper Company, and that was a wonderful company that had been started by Mrs. Hyde's grandfather, whose name was Pruyn, a good New York Dutch name. Mr. Pruyn bought large tracts of wooded area in upstate New York. He was one of the first entrepreneurs who "farmed" his woodlands—he didn't cut them all down and destroy them, but he planted every time he cut. The woodlands were near the upper Hudson River. Logs were floated down the Hudson in great barges to Glens Falls, also on the Hudson, where the paper company built a mill to make wood-pulp paper. At that time, and for many years, the entire output was sold to the *New York Times.* The large rolls of paper were floated down the Hudson to New York City. It was a very successful, steady, prosperous business, which still continues to this day.

Mrs. Hyde's two Pruyn sisters lived on either side of her, in a kind of small compound in the middle of Glens Falls, overlooking the paper mill. The Hyde's house is a beautiful Italianate house built about 1910, designed by Henry Forbes Bigelow of Boston, who also designed all three houses and the offices of Finch-Pruyn Paper Company. Influenced somewhat by Fenway Court in Boston,

the Hydes wished to fill their house with art. Dr. Valentiner advised them when they bought the great Rembrandt *Portrait of Christ*. The collection also has a wonderful small Botticelli, only about six by eight inches, and other Italian paintings, textiles, and furniture. Mrs. Hyde liked American art, so she added some good American paintings.

SMITH: Were there paintings from the Hudson River School?

WITTMANN: No. She liked Hopper, and Sargent. There was also some Renaissance sculpture. It is a good collection. Recent guidebooks list it as perhaps the most important European collection in the state of New York outside of New York City. When I became the curator in 1937, I started a series of lectures for adults in the community on the history of art.

SMITH: Was this your idea or Mrs. Hyde's?

WITTMANN: My idea. She said, " I want the women of this community to know about the collection." So I presented a series of six lectures, which I gave weekly. They were attended by a group of about fifty women. After a six-week interval I began another series. Later, I started art classes in drawing and watercolor for children. Feeling incompetent to teach studio classes (I was an art historian, not an artist), I found a very good teacher to provide the Saturday children's classes. The house was well suited for teaching as it was built around a central courtyard with brick paving and plants all around. In Italy, of course,

such a courtyard would be open. However, in the cold northern temperature of upstate New York, the house had a big glass roof which closed and opened electrically. So in the summer it was open, and if it rained you simply closed it, but in wintertime it was kept closed. The glass roof allowed wonderful daylight. It was a large open space, which could be used for classes for adults and children. One didn't worry about watercolor paint being spilled, as a splash of water on the bricks took care of that. The area was a conservatory so there was always running water to keep the plants fresh.

Soon, Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs invited me to teach a course on the history of art. Skidmore, twenty miles south of Glens Falls, was an excellent female college. In addition to teaching, I suggested that my students learn by organizing and presenting an exhibition of contemporary art. We decided to do an exhibit of contemporary German art. Later, we presented a one-man exhibit of Kokoschka, a great German contemporary artist, yet little known in the United States. We decided to present these exhibits at Skidmore and also in the public library at Glens Falls. I said, "Let's bring them up here and show them. You'll get more experience putting the exhibit up in a different kind of setting, you'll learn a lot, and you'll have fun doing it." So we did that, and of course it was successful at Skidmore. The students loved it, they reacted to it, and they began to see that it was important and they understood it, because

they were creating art themselves in their own art courses. The people in Glens Falls liked it less. However, the librarian said, "It's controversial, sure, but that's what we're here for."

Later, we did another exhibit of a different nature, but also fun. I said to the Skidmore students, "We live in upper state New York, which is an old part of the country, and there are a lot of works of art here in people's attics, and they don't know what they are and they don't like them. It's what we call folk art." Folk art was just becoming popular. There were several dealers in New York selling folk art. Much of it consisted of "primitive portraits." In the nineteenth century, itinerant painters traveled though New York State and Massachusetts. These artists would paint the bodies of the figures in the wintertime and in the summertime they would go around house to house, and say to the housewife, "Well now, here's a pretty dress and a pretty girl, but the face is missing. Let us paint your face in there and you can have the picture for $25." These artists were primitive painters because most of them didn't know how to paint very well. However, as contemporary art became more abstract, in the 1920s and 1930s, primitive was considered interesting. The very fact that they were not realistic, but were angular and strange was what made them interesting. They began to be collected.

So I said, "Girls, let's go around to the antique dealers and to local people

and find these portraits and make an exhibition of the art we find." We found enough to have an exhibit by just digging them out of people's attics. I asked old families in Glens Falls and they said, "Yes, we've got pictures up in the attic. Come see them." Sometimes they were beautiful but very primitive landscapes. I found out that a great many of these pictures were copied after famous prints. It turned out to be a very nice exhibition for Glens Falls as well as Skidmore. This exhibition was very popular in Glens Falls. It got very good publicity all over because it was one of the first exhibitions of American so-called primitive art. The students also enjoyed the exhibit as this kind of subject was quite different for them.

I enjoyed teaching. The students were excellent and serious. Skidmore was a four-year college, very different from my experience with the two-year college at Emerson before that. I continued teaching until we got closer and closer to World War II. Of course the British wanted us to get involved in the war, as did President Roosevelt. At this time the United States established a draft and every male had to register. They used a lottery system for calling up numbers; you got a draft number, and then your number was called up. I was about twenty-six. I happened to have one of the first numbers to be drawn. [laughs] I told Mrs. Hyde I was going to have to leave her. She said, "That's too bad, but when you get out, come back." She found another young man,

through Valentiner I think, to take over and do the work that I was doing, and she went right on with her project.

I was drafted in February 1941—before the United States had entered the war—and went into the army from Glens Falls, which meant that I was sent to Camp Upton, on Long Island, which was a so-called collecting point in those days. Camp Upton had been a World War I camp out on Long Island, and had been resurrected for use by the newly drafted. I went down with a lot of farmers from upstate New York, many of whom had never been off the farm before. They didn't know how to act or how to behave or anything—really strange people. And there were also men from Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx—all those people went out to the collecting point and were mixed up together. We were assigned uniforms, equipment, and a barracks—there were barracks from World War I still there. The barracks each held about sixty men, and we were put in charge of noncommissioned officers.

We were interviewed and classified by what they thought we might be able to do in the army because they had an army classification system supposedly based on what you did in private life. I told them I'd been doing museum work and teaching, and they didn't quite know what to do. They didn't get many men like that. At that time it just happened that the classification department was very much understaffed, and this was the department that interviewed everyone that

came in, gave them an army classification based on their civilian life, and then after a few days they were sent out to a training camp in another part of the country. Orders would come in for fifty men in the artillery at Fort Bragg, and they would be sent down to Fort Bragg artillery. Sometimes because they had some kind of mechanical background the army thought they'd be suitable for that; other times they simply had to fill an order. So the collecting point had to send fifty men. Twenty of them were classified the way they should be, and the others were just thirty bodies.

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[Tape V, Side One]

SMITH: I had a follow-up question from yesterday, somewhat of a broad question. You were saying that you were in a rather unusual position financially in the museum world since it was usually taken as a given that museum curators and certainly directors were men of independent means.

WITTMANN: Yes, this happened in my generation; it's not true today but it was then.

SMITH: I know at the same time, at least in the Ivy League schools, this was also true of the professors of art history. They may not have been as wealthy as Paul Sachs, but they at least were quite comfortable.

WITTMANN: Comfortable. I hadn't thought about that but it was true.

SMITH: In the fifties the transition that took place was sometimes an uncomfortable one at some of the colleges. I wanted to ask you how you think that made you different in terms of your programmatic interests and whether it posed, shall we say, psychological difficulties for you? You certainly weren't from a poor family, but you were dependent upon your ability to work, and your field of interest was not one that was necessarily sympathetic to a young man in your kind of situation getting involved.

WITTMANN: I think the only way that it really affected me very much was that

I realized in those days, when I was young, everybody looked to the East. They were educated in the eastern colleges, and Harvard encouraged graduates to join museums. Most graduates wanted to work in the museums in New England, or in New York, and very few wanted to go farther west. Because of my own Middle West background I didn't hesitate to do that. I always thought that probably I had a better chance because I was willing to work in Midwest museums.

I think I would have had a harder time getting a job in a New England museum or in an East Coast museum, and I probably would have been paid less, because there was great competition from people who didn't really need the pay. I think that might be the only way in which it affected me in that sense. I had no other psychological problems with it. I liked my colleagues of my own age. Whether they had money or not made no difference to me and it didn't seem to make a great deal of difference to them. They were just good friends. We talked about Henry McIlhenny, who was probably among the most wealthy young men I ever knew, and he was just as friendly as anybody, a wonderful person, intelligent and interesting. We got along beautifully. So it really had no effect in that sense; it was only difficult in the economic sense of where I could get a good job that would pay me enough to keep me going.

SMITH: So did you feel that as a museum curator, and I guess later as a

director, you were able to make as much money as you might have made doing some other kind of work?

WITTMANN: I was never sure about that, but I was sure that I didn't care. So long as I had enough money to live on I was perfectly happy—I had no great ambitions to be very rich. In fact, if I thought about it at all, I always thought this was my own doing and my own choice, as my father told me years ago. I'm sure I could have made more money if I had gone into business, or decided to go to law school and become a lawyer, but it just didn't interest me. It didn't occur that I would ever do it because I had turned that off very early in life and had no real interest in money as such. I was interested in living in a comfortable way, but I found that no great problem, and it wasn't a question of getting rich. I knew I wouldn't get rich. I didn't want to get rich in that way.

SMITH: Did it affect your marriage plans at all, or your aspirations to get married?

WITTMANN: No, no it didn't. The aspirations to get married depended upon the times in which I lived and the time that I normally would have gotten married was during the war years, which were very difficult times. I did decide that I didn't want to get married until the war was over, simply because I never knew what would happen to me. I told you that I had met Margaret [Hill Wittmann], my one and only wife, early during the war years—it must have been in 1942.

We got to know each other and liked each other, but we decided we'd wait until the war was over before we'd get married. So it was that kind of thing more than money questions. I don't think that affected my feeling at all. She was perfectly happy living a simple life. We've had a lovely life, actually, and as time has gone on we've lived very comfortably. The early years were difficult, but once I got to Toledo and began my career there things went very smoothly. We were able to buy a house—a comfortable small house—when our first child appeared. Later we bought a larger house, and we've always gotten along very well.

SMITH: The other area that I wanted to talk to you about relates to your growing up in Kansas City in a family where you had no exposure to the arts. You are often credited with being one of the pioneers in public outreach and art education. Do you think that your background has been a factor that has made you more acutely aware of the need for education?

WITTMANN: I'm sure it had some effect. I was always interested in education. I told you that not having this background at home and not having a mother after age seven, I found that I turned very much to the schoolteachers I knew in those days. They were wonderful women. They had a lot to do with the development of my life—not my career, but my life. I'm talking now about grade school teachers and beginning high school teachers. I was dependent on them for a

great deal and learned a great deal. It was really one of those teachers who got me interested in literature and in writing for the first time, and then when I went away to college, as I told you, I thought I might be a writer. But that came from the inspiration of one or two great women teachers in grade school and high school, which was wonderful.

I think I've always had an interest in education because I feel that it's one of the ways that you can help people to develop and broaden their own interests. But I think that a greater interest developed during the war. I thought a great deal about what I was going to do after the war if I survived, and also what life would really mean. As I told you, I had already taught in schools and in colleges, and indeed in the army, which we haven't really talked about very much—I did some teaching there too at one time. But it was more the fact that after I saw the destruction of the war in Europe, I decided that I wanted to live the rest of my life in a constructive way and not in a destructive way—I had seen enough of destruction. I had been a part of it, not a very serious part, but certainly a part of it in this whole World War II.

One of the chief reasons I went to Toledo was because it had a reputation already as being a museum with a well-developed, large educational program. I promoted education in Toledo and it became a very important factor. Strangely enough, later on, when we needed more money for the museum and began a new

fund-raising program in the city, I quickly found out that the educational policies of the Toledo Museum had had a lot to do with its economic development. There were literally hundreds and probably thousands of people who contributed money to the museum simply because they had enjoyed and benefitted from the classes they took there, which were all free to them, and they wanted to repay some of this. The great reason the museum still has one of the largest endowment funds is because these people in the community want to repay some of the good things that have happened to them through the museum. The museum was a very important part of their lives and of the community of Toledo. So it's that aspect I think, and certainly the respect for the teachers I had, but it was more what I wanted to give back in the years after the war.

SMITH: We can continue where we left off yesterday, which was your military service. You started out in the army and then you transferred to the army air force, and then you eventually wound up in the OSS.

WITTMANN: As I told you, I was drafted early in 1941—one of the first draftees—and was sent to Camp Upton on Long Island, and there I stayed for some time.

SMITH: Before the U.S. had entered World War II?

WITTMANN: Yes, this was before World War II had started, but after the draft system had been set up. My first assignment was to interview the incoming

civilians who had also been drafted as I was—interview them and classify them. I was twenty-nine years old at that time, rather older than most draftees, but I was unmarried and therefore subject to the draft. Most of the men who came in were in their very early twenties; it was one of the reasons they didn't quite know what to do with me. During that summer, the government changed the rules and decided anyone who was over twenty-seven years old could become reserves, because they didn't really need them. They were bringing in so many young draftees, who were much easier to train than somebody as old as I. So I was allowed to leave and I was put on reserve status. By that time I think I'd already become a private first class. I made the great sum of $30 a month.

When I got out I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to go back to Glens Falls. I wrote a good friend of mine, who was then director of the Portland (Oregon) Art Museum. He replied, "Sure, come on out, I'd love to have you. You can be the associate director of the museum." I said I didn't think I would be there very long because the war appeared more and more imminent. He said, "That doesn't matter, come out and enjoy life out here, and you'll see a new part of the country that you don't know at all." So I went out there and did just that. I think I went out in October or November. In December Pearl Harbor happened, and I knew very well that I'd be back in the army pretty soon after that. But I went on and had Christmas out there in

Portland, had a great time, and got to know a very good museum. I kept in touch with my friend Bob [Robert Tyler] Davis who was the director of the museum; he and his staff were very kind to me.

I didn't give the army my new Oregon address. They still had the old address in Glens Falls, so it took them some time to find me, and I didn't worry too much about that because I knew they would. Sure enough, the letter finally came and they told me to report to one of the camps out in Oregon. I've forgotten the name of it now. I went there, reported in, and there were orders to send me back to Camp Upton—on the other side of the country. They told me there weren't any troop trains going east—they were all going in other directions. So they gave me a rail ticket, and ordered me to report to Camp Upton. They gave me ten days or so to get there, so off I went on my own, having a great time going by train across our country, back to New York and Camp Upton.

You know, I didn't see how we could lose this war because we were such a vast country. As I went day after day on the train and saw these vast fields and farms, and the enormous physical wealth of the country, I realized what a great country this was, and it never occurred to me that we wouldn't win the war eventually. I got back to Camp Upton and there found some of my friends, who said, "Where have you been?" I told them and they said, "We got back right after Christmas, so you got two months off that we didn't have." Anyway, I

went back to the same kind of assignment I had before—interviewing new draftees and classifying them. By that time I had become a kind of personnel specialist, as it was called.

After several months of that—that is, through the summer of 1942—the army needed new officers, and there were many offers to noncommissioned personnel to apply for officer training school. One of my friends went off to the Signal Corps officer training school, one went in another direction, and I chose to apply to the army air force training school in Miami Beach. I was accepted and went down there—six weeks' training I think it was. A lot of it was just physical training to get you in really good shape, and then there were courses you had to take to prepare you for becoming an officer. I was going to end up as a second lieutenant. I got halfway through all that when it was announced that additional instructors were needed. So I taught personnel regulations to these young men who were going to be officers—at that time it was young men, not young women yet.

I graduated from the school December 9, 1942, and at that time we were offered the choice of what we wanted to do. I could go into the Eighth Air Force, which was forming at that time in England, or they said, "You can try this new organization, the Air Transport Command. Frankly, it's so new we don't know much about it, but if you want to try it, we'll send you up to Washington

and they'll tell you more about it." So I said sure, and I was assigned to the Air Transport Command that was just forming in Washington, D.C.

The concept was that we needed to transport troops and supplies and everything else around the world, because we'd gotten into a global war. This Air Transport Command would develop new airfields, new warehouses, and new barracks to house troops as they were assigned around the world. Airlines personnel were brought in and C. R. Smith, who had been head of American Airlines, was made a general. He really ran the new organization, although we had another regular army general also, to keep the army part of it straight. Smith ran the ATC just the way he ran an airline. All around the world we developed new airports—we had to, because the planes couldn't fly very far, a lot of them were DC-3s. They also commissioned men who had extensive experience in hotel work because they had to build a lot of semihotels at all these airports.

They commissioned one of the great movie photographers, [Pare] Lorentz, to teach pilots how to fly into these new fields. A new airfield would be developed where one had not been before. They very quickly laid down some runways and put in buildings to house people and supplies, and they quickly had to train young pilots with no previous experience how to fly. Lorentz flew into these new airports in the nose of a bomber plane, taking moving pictures with sound: "Now, on the right you have this mountain range, look out for that." On

the left maybe there would be the ocean, or something—you had to hit this thing right. The equipment wasn't so good. Often it was pretty primitive because they didn't have all these guided runways that they now have; you just had to find the runway and set down on it.

The Air Transport Command was controlled from Washington. We were the one part of the army that controlled all personnel, officers, everything—from Washington, D.C. Our personnel were never assigned to another air force; we always remained part of the Air Transport Command. It was a unique operation, which meant that there had to be a large command headquarters there in Washington. Of course I fell into that because of my personnel work, and I spent a good part of the war in that personnel department of the Air Transport Command as it grew to have tens of thousands of military personnel as well as many civilian personnel.

The Personnel Command of ATC was headed up by Frederick Atkinson, a general who had been head of personnel for Macy's, the big department store. Of course Macy's had stores all over the country, and Atkinson was very skilled indeed in knowing how to handle large groups of people. He became a very good friend, and I saw a lot of him after the war, when he went back to Macy's. They attracted extremely able people to this unusual Air Transport Command.

I stayed with the ATC for a long time and I got somewhat bored with it

and wanted to get out of it, but I didn't quite know how to do it. Finally, a friend of mine came back from London. He was Charles Sawyer, a professor I had known in college, and he was in the OSS, stationed in London. He was a private in the army, but in the OSS no one ever knew what anybody's rank was. You had privates in charge of majors and so forth, because it was the job that had to be done, not the rank, and they drew in navy officers, army officers, privates—they'd get people from wherever they could get them. So Charles returned to Washington and wanted to return to civilian status. He asked if I would consider taking over some of the work he'd been doing. I said sure, so I was interviewed by the OSS, and then I had to ask permission of the Air Transport Command to transfer, so I went to Fred Atkinson, head of personnel, and said, "I really feel I've done everything I can and I'm just repeating what I've been doing. I have an opportunity to do something which would make use of my civilian background in art." He replied, "Sure, if that's going to be advantageous and you can contribute more there than you can here, I'll release you if the request comes from the OSS." The OSS made the request, I was transferred, and then I was told, "Fine. Now you'll have to take the training."

They took us off in a car to some place in Virginia. We never knew where it was. It was a big old farm down there, and we spent about a week there going through all kinds of physical training and all kinds of classes: how to

handle various weapons; what to do if you were dropped in a parachute in Europe; how to pick locks; how to photograph people without their knowing it, with a little matchbox camera—all the things you had to know. OSS was like the army in that you were trained for various kinds of assignments. I passed all the physical and psychological tests. These tests apparently showed how stable we were, I guess, or how unstable—not sure which. I was then assigned to a group and I became part of a program that I knew about, which was what I really wanted to do.

This was a program that had been developed within the counterintelligence section of the OSS because it had been reported that German spies had begun to accept works of art that had been taken by the Germans, instead of Swiss francs. Most spies, then as now, wanted to be paid in Swiss francs. It's an international currency they can always use, but so is art, and art can be easily moved from one place to the other. We had a theory—and some good facts in back of it we thought—that some spies were beginning to accept art. That was the reason our small art unit was established under counterintelligence in the OSS. But it turned out later to be only a theory, with no real proof.

The whole organization the Germans organized for seizing works of art all over Europe was a well-organized Nazi project. It was perverted to the point where it had turned into a way for Goering, and Hitler to a lesser extent, to form

great collections of art from works they had seized in whatever occupied part of Europe they could reach—private collections mostly, which had not been removed before the war. The Nazi organization simply seized the works of art, sometimes paying for them with occupation marks, sometimes buying them from collaborators, but often just taking them. The amount of art seized was huge.

When the allied invasion of Europe began, the British and the French moved in from the north, the American forces came in through the south, and the Russians came in from the east of course—all heading for Berlin. The American forces coming into Bavaria were the ones who uncovered the works of art, because during the latter days of the war, most of the art that had been in Berlin and nearby was moved south and stored in salt mines, castles and caves. American troops received most of these works of art because the Germans who were in charge of the Bavarian storage centers surrendered. They had been ordered by Hitler to destroy the art, but they couldn't bring themselves to do so because many of them were German museum employees. American troops transferred the works of art carefully to Munich where a collecting point was established, a building which had not been bombed, built by Hitler to serve as a museum for the kind of art that he liked. Then the great problem was how to sort it out, how to find out what belonged where, and to whom, and that's where this small group that I worked with in the OSS came in. It was their assignment

to find the German personnel who had seized the looted art for Goering and Hitler, to interrogate them, and to prepare reports on how this had all happened. These were the first and only serious reports.

Of course it's a long story which I won't go into here because it's already been written about in several books and newspaper accounts, and you've also interviewed others who were even closer to it than I was. But this small group of ours was made up of men who had been transferred from the navy and the army—men who had had good experience. The group was headed up by James Plaut, who had been a museum professional in Boston. Lane Faison, a professor at Williams College, was active in it, and several others. I did some of this too of course, but later on—they were the ones who really pioneered in it.

By the time I went to Europe for OSS, I had orders to go anyplace I wanted to go in Europe. At that time I was a captain in the air force, so I could wear my uniform, or I could go as a civilian—as we all could in the OSS. I worked out of an office in Paris. I went to London of course to see British colleagues. I went to Switzerland to talk to some of the people in the embassy for information on certain spies. Berne, the capital of Switzerland, was a great international center for all kinds of spies and all kinds of information. I went up to Sweden because we thought there was a clear-cut case of works of art being taken and deposited there by German spies. I talked to the Swedish officials up

there about it. Sweden, you remember, was a neutral country, as was Switzerland. Their answer was, "Who do you think we're going to be doing business with after the war—not with you Americans. We're going to be doing business with the Germans, so we're not interested at all in helping you with your project." There was no way I could break down that barrier, so that was the end of that. We never did find out much about that as a matter of fact, and probably it was not a very valid issue, but what we did do was end up making a series of important reports on how these works of art had been taken by the Germans, who had done it, and how they had done it.

About that time also, the collecting point at Munich was ready to give back a great many of the works of art. The Germans were very methodical and had kept very good records. Once we were able to get the records, we could sort out pretty easily who had taken what from where. We then invited young officers from France, Holland, Italy, and Belgium to come and identify their own countries' works of art and make provisions for returning them. We decided very early on that we would have nothing to do with giving the works back to individuals, although in most cases we knew exactly where they'd been taken. We decided that was up to the countries themselves. In the case of France, for instance, there were a great many collaborators who simply sold to the Germans because they were so sure the Germans would win the war.

SMITH: So even if the works had been sold "legally," or voluntarily, the work was still repatriated to—

WITTMANN: Yes, repatriated to the country, and it was up to the country then to decide what they would do with the art. In fact, I was present in Paris when 283 works of art that had been repatriated were exhibited at the Orangerie, in June 1946. There was lots of excitement, large French crowds . . . beautiful works of art returned to France. The French were very careful about returning the works of art to their owners. Many works of art that French officials felt had been sold illegally by collaborationists were never given back, and you find them in various provincial museums today. I'm sure that happened also in Holland, but to a lesser extent, and in Belgium. Italy was a puzzle for us all; we never knew what happened, because Italy was on the side of the Germans, then they gave up on the war and the Germans in revenge destroyed so much in Italy as they retreated north that things got very confusing there.

Anyway, that's what happened, and the OSS was able to accomplish a great deal in helping to sort these things out. The European officers who came to Munich to identify their works of art were all young men who had started a museum career and had then gone into the service as I had done, simply because that's what we all had to do at that time. However, they also intended one day to go back to their civilian life and return to museums, or teaching. I liked them

very much and it was a great opportunity to meet a lot of young men of my own age. We became fast friends. You know how it is in the service, you get to know people almost overnight. After the war I looked them up and kept in touch with them. Many of them became the directors and curators of European museums. We got to know their wives and their families, and they visited us in America. It became a great network of art experts that was very helpful to me in the years following when I began to acquire works of art for the Toledo Museum.

SMITH: I know in the Netherlands you were quite close with Robert de Vries.

WITTMANN: Yes, Bob de Vries became a very good friend.

SMITH: When you began to collect Dutch painting, would you consult with him as to what might be available, or what dealer to go to?

WITTMANN: He is a good example to talk about. Bob de Vries was an interesting museum man. He was head of the Mauritshuis Museum, which is an eighteenth-century building in the Hague filled with wonderful Dutch paintings from the seventeenth century on. It was a royal collection and didn't change very much. They seldom had funds to buy works of art, but they had to take care of the great works of art that were there—it was something like the Frick Collection in New York. Bob de Vries was a high government official, had a great knowledge of where everything was in Holland, and he knew the collectors. He would say to me, "You should go see so-and-so because he wants to sell

something; he needs the money. We can't buy it of course—if we could I wouldn't tell you about it, but we can't. So why don't you look into it. You'll benefit from it." More than once we were able to acquire a very important work of art in that way. On the other hand, Bob de Vries became such a close friend that if he had anything that he wanted to buy with the funds he had, which were very limited, he'd ask me to stay away from it.

I remember one auction in Amsterdam, years later—an auction of a famous private collection that had been formed by one of the heads of a big department store there. It contained beautiful furniture and paintings, and I said, "I'd like several of these objects, Bob. I like that table over there. It's an eighteenth-century table done in the French style but done by a Dutch craftsman—I'd love to have it in the Toledo Museum." He said, "Oh, please don't do that. This is the one thing I want to buy. I don't think it's going to cost much and I think I can get it. It belongs in the Mauritshuis because it was done by a famous Dutch craftsman named [Daniel] Marot who worked in France, and this is really a Frenchified Dutch table; it's made of oak, it's beautiful, and I want it and I know just where I'm going to put it in the Mauritshuis, so don't, please don't try to buy it. Why don't you try to buy this group portrait." It was a group of four or five men standing and holding the tools they used to refine and test gold [*The Syndics of the Amsterdam Goldsmiths' Guild* by Thomas de

Keyser]. He said, "That's an extraordinary picture. There are no group portraits in America." As you know they were very popular. Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* is a group portrait. The Dutch had that specialty of painting portraits of skilled workmen in the various guilds. So I said I would try to buy it. I succeeded at the sale, got it, and bought it for what I considered to be very little money.

I was about to export it when the city officials in Amsterdam said to me, "If we'd known how inexpensive it was going to be we would have bid for it at the auction, because, after all, this is an Amsterdam guild, and we really feel it ought to stay here." I said, "I'm sympathetic to what you say, but I am buying for a public museum where it will be seen; it's not going into a private collection where no one will see it. It will be on view in America and will become a very famous picture there. You had the same chance I had, and you didn't even bid." I couldn't justify going back to my museum and saying, "Yes, I bought it, but then I gave it up." So I did buy it, and it is the only Dutch guild portrait in America. It's a marvelous picture and it means a lot to the Toledo Museum. It's not the largest or the most famous, and it isn't even by one of the greatest of the Dutch painters, but it really is a monument that tells a lot about Dutch life.

SMITH: Of course the Dutch government theoretically could have blocked the export.

WITTMANN: No, they couldn't. The Dutch had no laws against export at that

time, and that's one of the strange things. France didn't have very serious laws for a while, then later they did. In other countries you couldn't export anything legally.

I got to know some of the English military officers in Munich also. They too had been assigned to identify works of art seized by the Nazis. Some of my good friendships in England came about that way, and the same was true in France. During the war Gerald Van der Kamp had been in charge of the works of art of the Louvre, which had been hidden in southern France. Even before war was declared the Louvre had emptied its galleries and moved the works of art to various castles in southern France. After the war, Van der Kamp was in charge of the postwar renovation of great palace of Versailles. He helped me to have an exhibition in our country of art from Versailles, for which he sent over great French furniture, paintings, and beautiful objects, like the cradles of some of the kings of France. It was a splendid exhibit, organized and shown in four American museums. Van der Kamp came with the exhibition and was later criticized in France for having sent such priceless works of art to America, but he saw that they all got back safely, and nothing was damaged.

SMITH: I am also wondering about your connections with Americans, in terms of the various networks that you've participated in. Part of it is the Harvard network, but the OSS seemed to provide another set of networks.

WITTMANN: It did. The OSS network included people I had known before, but I got to know them much better because one makes great friends very quickly in the service, and I did keep in touch with them. I've always kept in touch with people like Lane Faison, and many of the others, including friends in Europe.

SMITH: You had mentioned yesterday [off-tape] Ted Rousseau.

WITTMANN: Well, Ted was an extraordinary man who I should speak about just very briefly. You didn't do an interview with him because he died too soon. Ted Rousseau was in [Harvard] when I was there, but he was several years younger. I got to know him then. He was a brilliant young man. His father had been head of the Guaranty Trust Company in Paris, and Ted was raised in Europe, in Paris mostly, but he went to schools in England—Eton and later Oxford I think. He went to Harvard also, and when we entered the war he was commissioned in the navy, went immediately into intelligence, and soon joined the OSS because of his languages and because of having been brought up in Europe.

[Tape V, Side Two]

WITTMANN: Rousseau was stationed in Portugal as an intelligence officer; it was a great center for communications of spies. We sometimes don't realize that spies and those in intelligence do talk to each other, and Portugal was one of the places where they did that. So Rousseau was stationed there, gathering

information in general. He was very good at it. When the OSS needed people with an art background as well as an intelligence background, they recruited Ted Rousseau. He joined the OSS art group along with Jim Plaut, who I told you about, and Lane Faison.

After the war, Ted Rousseau went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art as curator of paintings and was very successful at that. He became very helpful to the Toledo Museum because he couldn't buy everything that he wanted to buy for the Metropolitan. He knew everybody in Europe, and much art was offered to him because he represented the Metropolitan Museum. Ted would call us in Toledo and say, "There's a great painting I'd like to buy, but I can't. If you want it, go and see so-and-so." So-and-so being a dealer or an agent, usually some obscure person we never heard of, but they all went to see Ted Rousseau because of his long European connections.

One day Ted called up and said, "I am so discouraged and disappointed; the Metropolitan board has just turned down what I think is one of the greatest paintings I have ever had a chance to offer them. They don't want to buy it." It was a great Rubens altarpiece [*The Crowning of Saint Catherine*] for the church in Malines, in Belgium, which came out of the church in the eighteenth century and had been in English collections. It ended up in Goering's hands, but somehow made its way after the war to that collecting point in Munich. It was

eventually returned to its rightful owner, who lived in Canada, and he had put it on the market. Well, some board members of the Metropolitan Museum thought it was an eighteenth-century copy. Rousseau told them there was no way it was eighteenth century. He said there was a clear history from the time it was painted, and anybody that said it was eighteenth century just didn't know what they were talking about. Ted always felt frustrated by the Metropolitan's loss to of this painting. So, we went to look at it, and we bought it for Toledo. It had been offered not only to the Met but also to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, which also couldn't acquire it.

SMITH: Did Boston turn it down for the same reason?

WITTMANN: Same reason, I suppose. They probably went to other curators there at the Met, who may have said, "Oh don't touch it; it's eighteenth century." Ted didn't believe that; he thought it was a great masterpiece. Shortly after we bought it, the greatest Rubens expert in England visited Toledo and he said, "This is indeed the best Rubens in America; it's one of the greatest works by Rubens that anybody will ever have." Now it's a very famous picture; it's probably the most important picture in the Toledo Museum. Ted, to the day he died, always used to say it was the greatest loss the Metropolitan ever had. He was brokenhearted. He really wanted that picture for the Met.

SMITH: That gets back to the question of the eye again, and how experts with

equally well-trained eyes can disagree on things.

WITTMANN: That's right, and the experts in this case were people that I know—I know who turned it down—and I think it's one of these cases where they talked themselves into believing it couldn't be real. They were so scholarly and so sure that it couldn't be real that they were unwilling to look carefully at the picture itself.

SMITH: What convinced you that it was real?

WITTMANN: It just looked right; there was no question in my mind at all about it. I took one look at it and said, "This is a great coup for Toledo." But in back of that also was Ted's own opinion, which I respected.

SMITH: But you must have respected the opinion of the other curators, who said it was a copy—or you would respect them as professionals.

WITTMANN: I didn't respect them so much. They were the ones who wrote catalog notes and got involved with this whole scholarly process, which is important, I admit, but not that important. You still have to look at the original work of art. They got so tangled up with the whole thing that they just couldn't see it clearly. I think there's such a thing as looking too much or too little at something, and I think that this was a case where they depended on their notes and didn't look at the picture carefully enough.

SMITH: As soon as you looked at it, you had no doubt whatsoever?

WITTMANN: I had no doubt, no doubt in my mind whatsoever. It seemed so clear to me and I couldn't see any reason to doubt it; it didn't look eighteenth century at all. That's not to say that there weren't eighteenth-century copies of earlier paintings, of course there were, but it's this thing that I said yesterday: eighteenth century looks different from the seventeenth century and an eighteenth-century artist can't paint like a seventeenth-century artist—it's just different. It's more detailed, not as broad in scope, and the brush stroke is different. So there was no doubt in my mind.

If I may, since you're interested in how this occurs, I can tell you one more story about Rubens. In the latter days of my directorship in Toledo, another great Rubens came on the market—not so great as the one we have, but a very important one, almost as large. It was a portrait of Rubens, his wife, and his young son in their garden. Rubens was a very wealthy man as you know, and a great diplomat—traveled all over Europe. He was very successful, had a beautiful wife who he loved very much, and a little child. It was a beautiful, big picture, and I was shown it by the dealer [Georges] Wildenstein. I've always been close to the Wildenstein firm, and I've done a lot of business with them. If I can, I'll tell you some of the stories about them. At any rate, they always showed me everything. Wildenstein said, "Of course you don't want to buy this because you have the greatest Rubens in America, but do you want to see it?" So

I looked at it carefully and said I wished we could buy it. It was a lot of money. By that time it was a very high price compared to what we had paid for ours, but it was worth every penny of it. I told Wildenstein I didn't think our trustees would want to spend that kind of money for another Rubens—we didn't really need it as much as we needed other things. At that time it was priced at about $6 million, which doesn't seem so much now, but it did then. So it was offered to the Met. Ted Rousseau was not living; he died too young. I never did know exactly what happened to him; I don't know if it had to do with the intelligence work or not, but he died a rather unpleasant death.

At any rate, the picture was then offered to the J. Paul Getty Museum, which by that time was known to be in existence—Mr. Getty had just died. I had gone out to Los Angeles to be a trustee and adviser to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. I got to know the curators of the Getty Museum, and soon after my arrival I heard that the Rubens had been offered to them. I said to the curator there, "That's the picture that I would buy above all else. If you could ever scrape together the money, that's the thing to buy, and then you'll have one of the great pictures of all time—there's no question about it." This curator said, "Well, I sort of like it all right, I'm looking at it, but we have a conservator who advises us on purchases. He says that the picture has been repainted, especially the figure of Rubens himself. The face has been altered greatly; I can see that in

the X ray. I don't think we're going to buy it; it's a repainted picture."

Later I learned that it was offered to the Los Angeles County Museum after the Getty Museum had turned it down, and while it was still out in California I said to the director over there, "You ought to buy that. You'll make your reputation on it if you buy it." Well, they didn't have the money, and they had the same conservator looking at it, and they said the same thing: Rubens' face is repainted. So the picture went back to New York, and by that time John Pope-Hennessy, who had been head of the British Museum and the National Gallery in London had come to New York to be a chief curator for the Metropolitan during his later years. He saw the picture after all these West Coast people had seen it, and he realized what it was. He went to Mrs. [Jayne] Wrightsman, who was then contributing generously to the Met and said, "We've got to buy this for the Met; it's the greatest thing you'll ever get." She gave the funds and he bought it for the Met, and there it is, a great picture. I asked John one time, "What about this strange idea that the picture has all been repainted. It always looked wonderful to me." And he said, "Well, you know, the head was altered, but it was altered by Rubens." As happens with so many artists, they paint something, then they decide it isn't quite right, and they change it. This is not uncommon but it's just Rubens repainting his own face. He changed his head so he was looking at his wife, who he loved very much. In the early version, he

was looking out of the canvas toward the spectator, and it just didn't seem right; he wanted to make it more intimate. And Hennessy said, "That's all it is. It's perfectly wonderful; every stroke is by Rubens. It's the greatest Rubens—except yours." So anyway, that was John Pope-Hennessy, who knew what he was doing. He wasn't fazed by any of this talk about some later artist repainting it.

SMITH: How do you distinguish between what would seem to be normal emendations that an artist would make and somebody coming on the scene later?

WITTMANN: It's usually easy enough. There are various ways you can tell. One is the brushwork itself—brushwork is just like handwriting, really. You learn to recognize it. In addition to that, if it had been painted at a later time, maybe the eighteenth or nineteenth century, which is what was said, the paint might well be different, different pigments would be used, and you could tell by the layers of paint if you looked at it carefully. Ultraviolet light or X ray or other scientific aids are often useful. Overpainting by a later artist or restorer, perhaps only to repair damage, is usually discernible through ultraviolet ray, because paints fluoresce differently under ultraviolet light.

SMITH: A leading expert on Rubens told me that there are many paintings that are genuine, authentic works by Rubens in which there's not a single brush stroke that he actually did himself.

WITTMANN: Of course Rubens, a successful artist, had a big studio. We have

to remember that artists through most of history until the nineteenth century worked the way an architect works today; that is, they had the concept and the idea, and then they would use assistants in their workshop to fill in unimportant parts of the painting. So that is one of the problems—how much was done by Rubens and how much was done by assistants in his studio. Sometimes, kings or noblemen who commissioned an original portrait wished to have less important duplicates to distribute to friends. Often these duplicates were done by studio assistants and would be less costly—like photographic portraits today. So there are often copies of famous portraits contemporary with the artist's original and not necessarily a later forgery.

These copies are a problem today for all of us—and this is why a skilled experienced eye is important. A painting may have come out of the studio. The painting may be seventeenth century, same pigments, often the assistant was very good at imitating the brushwork, so an attribution may be difficult and controversial. There are good examples of this with Rubens, as well as with many other excellent artists, such as Rembrandt. In fact, I once acquired for Toledo a beautiful portrait of a woman with a child and a nurse [*The Happy Child*], which for a long time, during the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century had been attributed to Rembrandt. However, in more recent times it was not considered a Rembrandt; it wasn't quite the quality of Rembrandt; but it was

one of his pupils [Nicolaes Maes]. And so I bought it, knowing what it was, feeling it was a great picture, which I still think it is, and over the years scholars have again changed their opinion and they now attribute it to another pupil of Rembrandt. However, it is, as always, an important, well painted, delightful picture. I bought it because of the quality of the painting. I didn't buy it as a Rembrandt, because I didn't think it was a Rembrandt. The main point is that it's a beautiful painting, a marvelous study of two women and a child.

SMITH: Did you then change the label to say either/or?

WITTMANN: This latest change of attribution came after I retired at Toledo. If the present curator at the museum changed the attribution, that should be his decision. Changes of attribution do happen as scholars discover new records or change their opinions. Incidentally, this picture had been seized by the Nazis, then returned to France, where it was exhibited, and it was attributed to Nicolaes Maes. In fact, since 1854 it has always been attributed to Maes.

SMITH: I have just a few more questions on the OSS. One concerns the tenor of your relationships with the Germans in Germany. Did you begin to develop relationships during that time?

WITTMANN: I wasn't very sympathetic with the German art professionals who systematically organized the looting. Goering was a serious art collector in a strange way, but that hardly justifies his methods of collecting—seizing art

through raw power. However, I did have sympathy for a lot of the minor German officials who worked at the collecting point in Munich. They had been carefully vetted, and they were not involved in the looting; they were trying very hard to make enough money to live on in those days—even to eat. It was a very difficult time for Germany. Some of the German curators who accompanied the Berlin pictures exhibited in American museums before their return to Germany became excellent art professors in American universities.

There was one German who had been a famous photographer. His name was [Johannes] Felbermeyer. He was employed as chief photographer at the Munich collecting point from 1945 to 1949. He kept a complete photographic record of all these works of art, as well as photographic records of the American and German personnel working in the collecting point. Felbermeyer returned to Rome after 1949. He had great classical knowledge and photographed almost all of classical Rome. My sister-in-law, Emeline Richardson, an Etruscan archaeologist, commissioned Felbermeyer to take photographs of Etruscan bronzes for her books. Through her I kept in touch with him and saw him when my wife and I were in Rome. He was a gentle soul, a wonderful human being. Years later, I tried to persuade the Getty [Center for the History of Art and the Humanities] to acquire his photographs, the negatives of which he had retained. This didn't work out, but after his death his widow and son again offered the

Getty the opportunity to purchase his photographs, and at that time the Getty Center decided to make the purchase. The collection included photographs from the Munich collecting point and photographs of classical Rome—classical sculpture and architecture. The entire collection, which consists of over 20,000 original negatives and 16,500 original photoprints, is now in the Getty Center.

The thing that pleased me greatly was that I found, in this collection, a photograph taken of the great Rubens now in the Toledo Museum that I've told you about [*The Crowning of St. Catherine*]. It was there, in the collecting point, taken off its stretcher—the painting is probably eight feet by ten feet—so there was simply a limp piece of canvas. It was held up so that it could be photographed by four men—two men on a ladder, two people holding it at the corners down below—and it was curved like the sail of a boat. There it was, our painting as it was when it had been rescued from Goering's property. Then it was rolled up on a wooden roller, three feet around and eventually returned to the real owner who was a German, as I told you, who escaped Germany and who lived in Canada during the war. So the picture got back to him and he put it on the market. I found the record of the picture as it was in Germany and knew then that it had been seized by Goering.

SMITH: I wonder about the degree to which you were involved with the politics of art repatriation. Did you have to adjudicate valid from false claims? I mean,

was there art in these collection centers that perhaps was in Germany legally?

WITTMANN: No, we were not responsible for that. There was a legal office charged with this.

SMITH: What about cold war politics—to what degree were you aware of or involved with the problems of repatriation to the Soviet-occupied regions?

WITTMANN: Yes, well, that became an issue. I remember I was in Berlin from time to time in those days, and there was a Russian army group in Berlin charged with returning works of art which the Germans had taken from Russia. We had in the Munich collecting point at that time a large number of Russian icons. The Germans had scooped them up from the churches and had taken them into Germany, and there they were at the collecting point. We knew they came from Russia, but we didn't know very much about them. We tried to interest the Russian officers in them, but at that time they had no interest in religious icons. The icons remained in the collecting point, and I don't know whether they were even returned to Russia.

We used to ask the Russians about the great city of Dresden, which the British and later the Americans destroyed. Fortunately, the works of art had been removed from the Dresden museums very early in the war and had been secreted, we were sure, in the eastern part of Germany, in some of the palaces outside of Dresden, but we didn't know where. Of course the Russians were first

to enter that area, so we asked, "What ever happened to all the Dresden pictures? You must have them." They said they didn't know anything about them, never heard of them. We never could get them to admit that they knew anything about the pictures from Dresden, which was one of the great art collections of the world. It wasn't until years after the war was over and the Russians were beginning to try to cultivate the East German regime that they allowed the East Germans to rebuild the Dresden Museum so that it could be used again, because it had been almost destroyed. After that, with great fanfare, the Russians sent back all the paintings from Dresden—they had had them all the time. They were returned in excellent condition. Nothing was destroyed and nothing was damaged. And so they're now back in Dresden. But that's an example of how the Russians rarely reveal much.

The other awful story that we don't know about was that Hitler, in the last days of the war, refused to allow some works of art which were still in Berlin to be removed. It was said that if he allowed this art to leave Berlin, he would be admitting defeat. However, these works of art were said to have been placed in some of the flack towers in Berlin, these great concrete underground shelters which were used for antiaircraft guns. When the Russians entered Berlin, they thought there were German soldiers in these flack towers. Instead of trying to get them out of this underground place they fired flamethrowers into the shelters.

We thought at that time that well over a hundred great paintings were destroyed. Shortly after the war, English art historians who had been active in the war wrote articles about these pictures for *Burlington Magazine*, the leading British art periodical. In the last year or so there have been articles suggesting that most of these pictures were not destroyed but are in Russia, and we may hear about them again some day if the situation changes and Russia decides it's all right to admit that they have them. I have no reason yet to believe that the pictures were not destroyed, but certainly at the end of the war the Russians were not cooperative with their American allies.

SMITH: Just to wrap up the war—actually this goes back to before the war, but I was wondering to what degree you followed political questions in the thirties. When did you believe that there would be a war and the U.S. would be involved in it?

WITTMANN: How politically minded was I? I was not particularly interested in politics as such. Certainly as a young man I wasn't. I took only one course in government at Harvard. I suppose to answer your question about the war, I think we were all aware that the war was going to come, because President Roosevelt had become so active in helping the British—the so-called lend-lease agreements. When we began shipping supplies across the Atlantic, we were concerned about the German submarines. Provocations became more involved. Then when the

draft was initiated it was pretty plain that we were getting ready for war then. I think from then on it was obvious that war would come to our country.

It was hard to come to the reality that I might be involved, or certainly that I might be involved for five and a half years. It was a long time in my life. I felt, in a way, that it was a kind of loss. I was interested in what I was doing. I hated to give up my civilian career of course, but from a patriotic standpoint, I realized I had to. Having agreed to that in my own mind, I soon decided that there was no point in trying to worry about myself, and that what I ought to do was to see what I could learn from the army, and from that point on the whole thing changed. I began to form friendships with fellow soldiers and liked them very much. Some of the men I began to meet had very little education, but they were just great human beings. I really learned more about people because I had led a somewhat sheltered life, I suppose. My friendships had been pretty limited to people who had been in college with me. But I then learned that if I tried, I could get along equally well with anybody, and this was a great learning process. This, in a way, was part, perhaps unknowingly, of the beginning of my interest in doing something about education in the arts—I felt anybody could be educated.

I interviewed incoming civilians at Camp Upton all day long, every day. I learned about a lot of different occupations: you could be a professional gambler, you could be a pimp, you could be a taxi driver, you could be a man

who doesn't want to talk about what he did in life. But I realized that all these people were human and interesting in their own way, and what you had to do is dig a little deeper and find out what they were really like. So this experience meant a great deal to me. I changed my whole point of view about people, and then I really became much more interested in the fate of people and what was going to happen, and I also became much more politically aware as time went on.

I was quite aware of the fact that in my own field of art, our United States government, at the end of the war, enacted a law that works of art would not be used as spoils of war. This came about because you may recall that at the end of the war the American army brought about a hundred great works of art that belonged to the Berlin museums to the United States and stored them in the National Gallery in Washington. A lot of propaganda was spread in Europe about how the Americans seized these works of art and were going to keep them. We had no intention of doing that, but we wanted to store them in safekeeping until the Berlin museums could be renovated. At any rate, that's why our Congress passed this law, and of course this was a new concept because art had always been used as the spoils of war. Many classic sculptures and Italian paintings in the Louvre museum were brought back from Italy by Napoleon. Many of the Italian objects in the Louvre could be said to belong to Italy. And many objects in the British Museum came from Greece.

SMITH: While you were stationed in Washington, did you spend any time at the National Gallery?

WITTMANN: Yes, I spent quite a bit of time there, mostly on weekends. I loved looking at the works of art there and at the other museums. The National Gallery was very generous to service people. There were concerts on Sundays, and if you were in uniform you could always go, and I used to take Margaret to these concerts.

SMITH: Did you get to know the curators there at that time?

WITTMANN: I knew some of them before the war, some of them very well, others I didn't know so well. I knew John Walker, who was the director at that time.

I'll tell you one strange story about the National Gallery. I got to know the pictures there pretty well and I knew the curator of paintings and would talk to him about them. After the war, when I was in Toledo, Margaret and I would always go to Washington in the summertime because Margaret's family still lived there. Once, I went to the National Gallery and noticed that some pictures were missing. I went to the curator and said, "What happened to the wonderful Degas, Manet and Monet—gone—and the Cézanne?" He said, "You probably thought they belonged to us and so did most people, but they didn't; they were lent to us during the war for safekeeping. We put them on the walls and we

never indicated who they belonged to, but after the war some of the owners asked that they be returned." These owners were well-known collectors in New York. I said, "What'd they do that for?" And he said, "I don't know, but I've heard that they're putting them on the market."

At the same time, in Toledo, a man who I knew very well—one of the trustees of the museum—said to me, "Otto, I've listened to you talk, I think you know what you're doing"—this was a very blunt character. William Levis was his name, and he was head of Owens Illinois, one of Toledo's large glass companies. Bill said, "I want some works of art for my home, and I only want two or three of them, but I don't want to search for them, I don't have time. I want you to find them for me and I don't want you to bother me with a lot of second-rate things. Just tell me what *you'd* buy, and how much it costs, and I'll buy it." That's the way he was; that's the way he talked. So when I heard about the wonderful Degas painting which I'd admired greatly in the National Gallery, I got on the train from Washington, visited the dealer who I'd heard had the picture. I looked at some other works of art and then said, "By the way, don't you have a Degas here?" He said, "Degas? Degas? Oh, yes, I may have one in the back room but I don't intend to sell it." And I said, "Well, let me just see it"—and it was the ex-National Gallery loan. I said, "I know where you got it and I know that it's going to be on the market." He said, "Yes, but I'm not

going to sell it for another year." And I said, "If I found a client that would buy it at your price today would you sell it?" Like any dealer he said yes, so I took the photographs back and said to Bill Levis, "Bill, here's one of the pictures you want." He said, "Fine, if you say so, I'll buy it." So he bought it, and he kept it in his house. He later gave it to the Toledo Museum of course, but in those days one could give a picture to the museum and still keep it at home.

SMITH: Did he appreciate the art, or was it wallpaper to him?

WITTMANN: No, he liked it; once he had it he became very fond of it, and he often said to me, "Otto, that's the best thing you ever got for me, just a beautiful picture." Then I did the same thing again for him. Again, it was another picture I noticed was missing from the National Gallery—a beautiful Cézanne landscape. The same thing happened; it belonged to another New York collector, and I went through the same process. I went to the dealer, in this case another dealer, found out he had it, found out what the price was, and persuaded him to sell it, and I went back to Bill and said, "Here's the second picture for you." He bought it immediately, his wife loved it, and they talked about it a great deal. As long as he or she lived they had it in their house. Every winter when they went south the picture came to our museum and every summer they would have it at home. So that was what could happen. I knew the museum was going to get the pictures, not only those, but other pictures as well that he had bought previously. They all

came to the museum in the end.

SMITH: Let's finish off today with your coming to Toledo. You were mustered out of the service at one point—

WITTMANN: Yes, in late 1946. I retired as a major in the air force posted to the OSS. I concluded my work with the OSS by coming back to Washington. By this time my OSS associates Craig Smyth and Lane Faison had returned to their civilian occupations, and I was the last one to leave—I was the end of it. The OSS asked me to close out the Art Looting Investigation Unit. I arranged to turn over all the records which were in our Washington headquarters office to Ardelia Hall at the State Department, who was in charge of the art records. They stayed there for years, and when Ardelia retired, they were turned over to the National Archives, where they remain. We compiled an alphabetical index of everyone we thought had collaborated with the Germans; it included the names of many French art dealers, and for that reason the information was classified secret. You know some of the things that occurred, some of the stories one heard during the war, and some of the facts that you thought were facts during the war probably weren't. There was gossip and spy talk: "Somebody had dinner with so-and-so and he's going to do a favor for someone"—this type of thing turned up. So they went into our files as collaborators. Maybe they were, maybe they weren't.

So all the records went over to the State Department and the OSS was closed. I then had to decide whether I wanted to go into the State Department, which was one of the offers that was made to OSS officers. I decided that I wanted to go back to museum work, and I wanted to do something that was creative and helpful instead of something that was destructive.

I remembered that the Toledo Museum of Art had the largest and best educational program in the country; that was well known in those days. I got in touch with the director of the museum there [Blake-More Godwin], who I had known slightly in my earlier museum career. I wrote him a letter and telephoned and said, "I'd like to be considered for a job. There should be some positions open because everyone went off to war except you"—he didn't go to the war, he stayed and ran the museum. But he said, "We don't have any jobs." So I said, "I think I'll come out and talk to you, and maybe you can give me some advice about other museums that might be hiring museum staff. After all, there are going to be lots of people leaving the service." So I got on the train and went out to Toledo. I went into his office the next day and sat down and talked to him, and he again said there were no jobs.

[Tape VI, Side One]

WITTMANN: In the same office, at a desk opposite the director, sat the museum's president, William A. Gosline. He signed all the checks and acted as

a sort of businessman for the museum. He not only took care of the business side of the museum but also went to New York to look at art and had a lot to do with buying works of art—especially modern art—for the museum. Billy Gosline listened to my conversation with Blake Godwin, and toward lunchtime said, "I've listened to you talk to the director, why don't you come and have lunch with me." So he took me to the Toledo Club, fed me several martinis, because he liked martinis, and we had a delightful lunch. Then I came back to the museum, looked at the art in the galleries and met several members of the staff. Toward the end of the afternoon I went back to see the director and said, "Well, now I've spent the day here and talked to your staff, and I really would like to come here because I know this museum's reputation in art education and I want to play a part in that. I want to return to a museum and I'd like it to be here at Toledo." He said again that there weren't any jobs at present.

As I left the museum, greatly discouraged, Mr. Gosline took me out the door and said, "When you get to the railway station, call me up. I'll be home by that time and I want to talk to you." So I did, and he said, "Otto, I know you just from lunch, but you're just what we need here. Of course there are jobs here. Almost all the staff left for the war except for the director. We're going to have to reconstruct the whole museum staff. I want you to join us." I told him I wanted to join the museum as the assistant or associate director, to help

reconstruct the staff, and to develop new directions. He replied, "That's all right, I'll arrange that. I'll call you in a few days." He didn't call me but Blake Godwin, the director, called me and said, "You know, I've been thinking about this, and I think probably we could offer you a job as sort of an assistant curator of some kind." And I said, "That's really not what I want to do. I want to be the associate director. I really want to have something to do with the direction of this museum's growth. It's a wonderful museum and I want to be a part of it." So he said, "I don't know about that; it's a title I hadn't expected to use, but I'll think about it." So a few days later he called up, obviously having talked it around, and he said, "All right, we'll make you the assistant director of the museum, and you can start whenever you can complete your responsibilities in Washington."

I took a couple of month's vacation and my wife and I moved in the fall of 1946. Margaret, my wife, was quite pregnant by that time and we had a difficult time finding a place to live because at that time there were very few rentals for couples with children available, and it was perfectly obvious we were going to have a child pretty soon. There was a hotel across from the museum, and the manager there gave us one room with a bed in it—that was all the furniture there was. We said, "But we're having this little child soon," and they said, "Don't worry, by the time you have the child we'll have a space for you."

So that's what happened and that was the beginning of my career at Toledo.

SMITH: Now I understand one of your first assignments was to assess the collection and where it should go.

WITTMANN: Yes, after I got there and got settled down, the director, Mr. Godwin, said to me, "You don't know this museum very well. Would you look at its collections carefully and objectively and give me a report." So my report indicated that the museum building was excellent, but that the collections were uneven. There were a few good Renaissance paintings, French impressionist paintings, a few modern paintings, which were not very good, no paintings at all from many other periods, no decorative arts, no furniture, and very little sculpture. The galleries were arranged in such a way that you came into the museum through a turnstile, which made it difficult for you to get in, and the first gallery you saw was filled with Barbizon pictures, which were rather dull and colorless. The best French pictures, the impressionist pictures, were way in the back of the building. I said, "I think the first thing we ought to do is to make a long range plan for growth of the collections. Secondly, we ought to begin to rearrange the galleries so that the most important and interesting works of art would be nearer the front of the building. And we should take out those turnstiles because they don't mean anything; it's just a way of counting people." They were also forbidding to our visitors. So that was the beginning of the

change.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you to compare Toledo at that time—its strengths and weaknesses—with other museums of the Midwest, such as the Detroit Institute of Arts, or the Cleveland Museum of Art.

WITTMANN: As for Toledo's position among midwestern museums, it had a beautiful building, built in 1912 and expanded in 1933. It was a very elegant, neoclassic building, which is what most museums were at that time; however, its collections were not very good. Either they didn't have enough money to buy well or they weren't seriously interested in what they were doing. They had no real concept of the museum as a place where you ought to be able to see examples of almost every kind of art, so that the public could get some sense of the history of art. As I mentioned earlier, when I was at Kansas City I had the chance to travel to see other museums because the Nelson Gallery's adviser, Harold Woodbury Parsons, insisted that the young staff members there have the chance to see the Cleveland Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, Detroit, and Toledo. I think the first time I saw Toledo was on that trip. I got as far east as Buffalo, I remember.

Based on that early trip, I could see that the Chicago Art Institute was a magnificent, large museum filled with great works of art, but Chicago was a big city, so that was no surprise. My own museum in Kansas City [Nelson Gallery

of Art] at that time had developed very quickly into a wonderful museum of European art, with very good American paintings, and there was that marvelous Oriental collection which I have already spoken about in detail. Cleveland had a great museum and a great director, William Millikan, and the wealthy families of Cleveland had donated important works of art. Dr. Millikan had bought very well, and the museum was broad enough to include not only paintings but the decorative arts. Indeed, William Millikan himself had been especially interested in works of art and was chiefly responsible for buying some of the great treasures for the museum. So I knew what a museum could be, and I felt that Toledo's collections were not very strong. I admired greatly the educational work which Toledo did; that seemed to be the most important and most interesting part of it. But the collections themselves were not terribly exciting, nor were they very comprehensive.

SMITH: But you must have felt that you could build it up with some ease.

WITTMANN: Well, at that time I didn't really know that I could, because I didn't even know I would ever have the chance to do it. I didn't know enough about how the buying was done or whether it could be expanded. I didn't know who really controlled the policies; I assumed that the director did, but I wasn't sure. All I could say was I felt that its collections were incomplete and, with few exceptions, of only fair quality. However, it was an important museum for what

it did for the people of Toledo because of the strong educational programs, free to all.

So that was where we were in early 1947. The director's request for a report on my views of the museum offered a wonderful opportunity to try to point out to the museum what it could become if it so wished. There were a few Italian Renaissance works of art of excellent quality, but there were no Dutch seventeenth-century paintings except for one Rembrandt, which had been given years before by [Edward Drummond] Libbey, the museum's founder. It's a good Rembrandt, but it's not a great one, and that's all there was. I remembered William Valentiner, director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, who I spoke of earlier, as being a man who had understood northern European art, and I remembered talking to him one time when I was at the Hyde Collection—he had bought that perfectly wonderful Rembrandt for the Hyde family. I asked him about art, and he replied, "You know, if I were a young man as you are, I would begin to buy works of art which are presently neglected. For instance, all the great collectors of the early twentieth century, like Frick, or Mellon, bought great works by Dutch seventeenth-century artists; they bought Rembrandt, Frans Hals, Vermeer, and many others. Later, tastes changed and collectors bought French impressionist art with its brighter colors and its livelier scenes. Nobody seemed to want the old masters anymore. Today one should try again to buy old

masters. I'd try to buy a Rembrandt and I'd try to buy a Rubens, because if you could find them, the prices would be much lower than earlier in the century. The trouble is that art dealers often don't offer art for which there is little profit, so they're all turning to French impressionism."

Valentiner knew a lot about the art market, and he was still active in advising Detroit art collectors. He knew the collectors who were collecting the great old pictures at the beginning of the century. He said, "I now realize that they bought very well, but now there are few such collectors." So I remembered his remarks when preparing the report for Toledo. Toledo had no Dutch seventeenth-century paintings—no Pieter de Hooch, no Vermeers. But there were many other great Dutch seventeenth-century painters. Toledo had bought good French impressionist paintings, but what happened before impressionism? Toledo had good Barbizon paintings, given by local collectors, but what happened before that? We had no great art from the eighteenth century. We didn't have very much English art, and we had just a few examples of American painting, mostly of the twentieth century. But what about the American eighteenth and nineteenth centuries? There were few collectors of American art. So these were some of the things I reported at the time, without knowing what would come of it. This was an abstract kind of report on what the museum would need to make it a good, general museum, and I left it at that. It took several years before it came

around to the point where I had a chance to exert some influence on what was bought.

SMITH: When did you start being involved with acquisitions directly?

WITTMANN: Well, I would think about 1949. Several things happened. I had to get to know the people at the museum, and I had to get to know Blake Godwin, the director, much better. Billy Gosline, the president of whom I spoke, died almost as soon as I came to work. His daughter, Margaret McKelvy, however, became an important collector for Toledo and eventually gave all her collection to the museum. I began to know the trustees because I was invited to trustee meetings, and that's where I met William Levis, who turned to me at the end of my first meeting and said, "Otto, I want you to buy some pictures for me."

Gradually, it became apparent that while Blake-More Godwin was the director and certainly was interested in art and went to Europe every year with his wife and looked at museums, he had a limited knowledge of art. He was also unsure of what to acquire. He was quite happy to release part of this task to someone with perhaps more self-assurance or knowledge of works of art. I guess the first break came when the New York art dealer Joseph Brummer died suddenly. The firm had to be dissolved, and the vast stock was sold in a three-day sale at Parke-Bernet in New York, in 1949. It was too soon after the war,

and there was more art than could be easily absorbed by museums and collectors. The three-volume catalog came out, I studied it carefully, I went to see the works of art, and I came back and recommended to the director and to the trustees that we try to buy some of these objects at auction. I recommended some medieval ivories of the Virgin and Child, some medieval tapestries, and some other objects. It had never occurred to our trustees to buy that kind of art, but instead of saying, "We don't buy that," or, "We haven't bought it in the past," they felt that the estimated bids were too low. I replied, "I think these medieval objects could lead us in a new direction of collecting for Toledo." They agreed. So I went to the auction and bid on the objects I proposed. We got the tapestries —a pair of French tapestries of wine making—and we got several medieval ivories.

Because I bid at the auction for the Toledo museum, several old European dealers telephoned and said, "If you're interested in this kind of art, I've got some material that you'd probably like to see." And so I learned about some dealers I never would have heard of otherwise. They were dealers who had left Europe in the Hitler days and had come to New York. They usually sold from their apartments. They had been able to bring with them enough rare and beautiful objects to sell slowly, and they lived on that revenue.

SMITH: Who were some of these dealers?

WITTMANN: One was a German named Stora. He had some perfectly

beautiful medieval ivories and enameled objects in his apartment—the last things he was able to bring to America. They were splendid objects from excellent old European collections. Prices were so low that one could hardly resist, and I persuaded the trustees to buy these.

SMITH: Did you have to study up on ivories before you made the purchase?

WITTMANN: I knew enough about them. I'd seen and studied them in museums and had discussed such art with William Millikan of the Cleveland Museum. I must say, I had to depend a great deal on the fact that they came from Brummer and the other dealers. Joseph Brummer was a legendary figure in those days. In my Harvard museum class, Sachs often spoke about Brummer, and took us to see him. Brummer had been a sculptor, then began to sell classical sculpture, medieval, and contemporary art in Paris, before moving to New York. He had a strange, gravelly voice, and he had only one assistant, who was a tall, heavyset woman. She would lift all the heavy sculpture, not Brummer.

I met Rosenberg and Stiebel on one of my first visits to New York after joining the Toledo Museum. This great art dealing firm came from Germany. Rosenberg and Stiebel had supplied the Rothschilds of Vienna with many works of art. They not only dealt in superb paintings, but they had important medieval objects. These were not sought after in America at that time. I soon began to

buy for Toledo beautiful objects from this firm at inexpensive prices. There were colorful enamels, intricately carved medieval ivories, and large, sixteenth-century silver gilt cups—eighteen, twenty inches high. These were usually commemorative cups awarded as honors in cities and states in Europe, made by the finest goldsmiths. I bought several for $10,000 or $12,000 each. Now they are almost never in the market. I bought them because of their high quality and perfect craftsmanship. I learned their history from the dealers and from the makers' marks. They added a new dimension to the museum because there were practically no three-dimensional objects in the museum at that time—it was mostly a picture gallery. The first French furniture I bought for the museum came from Rosenberg and Stiebel.

When I first went to see Rosenberg and Stiebel, in 1947, they took me not into the main gallery but into a little side gallery and sat me down in a chair while they sat together on a sofa opposite and said, "Now Mr. Wittmann, who are you and where do you come from?" I told them I was from the Toledo Museum of Art, and they said, "We haven't heard about that. Who else do you know?" So I told them of my background at Harvard, my war-time experiences, and they said, "Well, what do you want with us?" I replied, "You sold a wonderful Rubens portrait, a portrait of his wife, to William Millikan for the Cleveland Museum. I admired that picture so much that I asked Dr. Millikan

where he got it, and it was he who gave me your names. So here I am. Perhaps when you get a portrait or a picture that beautiful, you would let me know so that Toledo Museum could consider it." They were somewhat skeptical and that was the end of my first visit. They got up and left and I left. They didn't show me a single work of art.

I later heard from various sources that Rosenberg began to ask about me. Agnes Mongan of the Fogg Museum at Harvard telephoned me and said, "Otto, Rosenberg called up the other day and asked about you"—of course he was the brother of Professor Rosenberg at Harvard. The next time I went to see Rosenberg and Stiebel they were welcoming, and from that day forward they were great suppliers of art to the Toledo Museum. I bought many paintings as well as other works of art and furniture from them, and I eventually learned the source of the paintings, which I'll probably have to talk about later.

SESSION FOUR: 8 FEBRUARY, 1993

[Tape VII, Side One]

SMITH: Since you had mentioned last time that education was one of your primary interests, I thought today we would start by discussing your role in shaping the development of education programs at the Toledo Museum of Art from 1946 to 1976 and beyond, to some degree. Could you just outline what the state of the education programs was for adults and children in the late 1940s.

WITTMANN: I had known before, because of its reputation, that the Toledo Museum was one of the leading museums in the field of education, especially for children. The museum had been founded in 1901 by Edward Drummond Libbey, who had come to Toledo as head of the Libbey Glass Company, which later developed into Libbey Owens Ford, Owens Illinois, and Owens Corning Fiberglass, the three principal glass companies in Toledo. Libbey himself was interested in education. He had moved the glass company founded by his father in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to Toledo in 1888 because of the easily available natural gas there. Of course, heat is the most important element in making glass. Soon he announced that he wasn't satisfied living in Toledo, which was a small factory town with few cultural amenities. So in 1901, with a group of his friends, he initiated the founding of a museum with a group of his friends.

It was his concept from the beginning that the young museum should

have an educational program especially for children. If children can learn about art they'll grow up enjoying art and they in turn will contribute to the growth of the community. In order to accomplish this, he appointed as the first director of the museum, George W. Stevens. Now, George Stevens was not our present idea of what a museum director ought to be. He was a newspaper reporter and an early public relations writer who lived in the community and knew the community and loved it, but didn't know a great deal about art. But he too was convinced of the importance of free art education for all children.

Soon, Mr. Libbey, who was the museum's president, bought an old two-story frame house in downtown Toledo and said, "That's going to be the Toledo Museum of Art, and there we'll have room for classes for children." George Stevens's wife, Nina Stevens, became the director of education, and together they started studio art classes to create art and classes to study the few pictures there were in the museum. So this became not the first but the second home of the Toledo Museum of Art. The first had been a room in a downtown office building. It was so small and so limited that there's not much point in talking about it very much. Art and art education became so popular in Toledo that by 1910 or 1911 it was decided to build a new museum, a handsome building with marble walls and classical columns in the great tradition of that period. The new museum housed not only galleries for pictures, but also provided classrooms for

education.

That building was completed and opened in 1912, and by 1926 it had completely outgrown itself. The building then was expanded for the first time; it was extended so that instead of being a rectangle it became a kind of cube, and introduced into that cube was an auditorium which would seat about two hundred people. There, concerts and lectures on art could be presented. Music programs, which were to become important to the growing museum, were inaugurated at that time. I don't know of any other museum at that time that had a regular music program.

By 1926 the Toledo Museum offered the University of Toledo the opportunity to present art education classes and art studio programs in the Toledo Museum at no cost to the university. The university was very small at that time without very much money. It had been founded as a kind of trade school, but by this time it became a city university, so this agreement was an important step. The museum trustees felt college students should also have the opportunity to study art, therefore the museum should provide the space and the faculty to do this.

SMITH: You're talking about studio art as opposed to art history—or are you talking about both?

WITTMANN: The museum offered mostly studio art—drawing, painting,

aesthetics. Art history was limited to students in education—most of whom became teachers in Toledo public schools. The museum insisted that all students come to the museum, not only because we had classroom space for them, which the university did not, but also we had original works of art. It's always been the concept of the museum, and mine also, that students ought to look at original works of art as well as slides of works of art. I was educated at Harvard at a time when all art history courses there were taught with slides—mostly black-and-white slides in those days. Of course Harvard had the Fogg Museum, where all our classes were taught, but our professors didn't really emphasize very much the original works of art, and we really didn't have to go look at them. Toledo Museum, however, did insist that students look at original works of art.

There were not a great many museums that were doing much about education at that time. The Cleveland Museum had a small program—small in relation to the size of their museum. The Metropolitan Museum, for example, in those days didn't even allow children in the museum unless they were accompanied by an adult. This seems incredible today. The same regulations applied at the Boston Museum in earlier years. Some Middle West museums became more liberal and opened their galleries and classes to everyone.

George Stevens had his office right by the front door of the museum because he liked to watch people enter; he was very keen about people. While

his wife taught studio classes, from his office he was able to observe the flow of visitors. He got to know many of the children by their first names. In fact, he was something of a psychologist, too. Some of the little boys liked to race around the museum, and so he used to call them in and say, "Now listen, you're very special to me, and we're very glad you're in the building today and I hope you're having a good time, but you know there are some other kids out there that go racing around the museum, and they don't stop to look at anything. I'm going to appoint you as a Museum Junior Guard. I'll give you a badge to wear, and you show those other kids some of the pictures and tell them what's good about them." That's the way he behaved with people. He was a great people person.

Eventually, Toledo Museum's art education program became well known. It was one of the main reasons that I wanted to come to Toledo, because as I think I have mentioned before, after the destruction of World War II I was determined to do something constructive and to me museum education was constructive and therefore important. However, the museum's educational staff needed to be rebuilt. I found Donald Goodall, to be head of education. He was an artist and a university art history professor, who also had taught studio classes. He had come from California, where he had been part of an active program in San Francisco, and he seemed ideal for our purposes.

SMITH: When did you hire him?

WITTMANN: We must have appointed him about 1947, soon after I arrived at Toledo. This was a departure from the former Toledo procedure. The education program up until I arrived was directed by Mrs. Godwin, the wife of the director. This was exactly the same pattern that had been followed by the first director, George Stevens, and his wife Nina Stevens. Neither the Libbeys, the Stevens, nor the Godwins had children, so Mrs. Stevens and Mrs. Godwin could devote their time to teaching careers.

I was requested to reformulate the school, because Mrs. Godwin wished to retire. So, having employed Don Goodall, I left him the responsibility of finding new instructors. Some teachers remained, but Goodall brought in quite a few new instructors, and the whole tenor of the art school became more serious, more elevated, and more like a university art department. We continued to act as the art department for the University of Toledo; however, I soon learned that ever since the twenties we had been providing these services to the university at no charge.

SMITH: Did this mean that your art historians had to have Ph.D.s?

WITTMANN: No, not at all. They had B.A.s, some M.A.s. However, the university collected tuition fees from every student who took art courses with us. That didn't seem very professional to me, and it did prevent us from employing more professional educators. After considerable negotiation with the university

we worked out a compromise whereby the university would pay the museum five dollars for every student that enrolled in the art courses. We got our foot in the door at least. This was the beginning of a more professional relationship, which was to grow and develop in the future. The museum could employ a more professional teaching staff. The University of Toledo soon became part of the University of Ohio statewide system, along with other branches of the university in various other Ohio cities. Finally, the university, having more adequate state funds, decided that the art classes should move to their campus—which was about two miles away. The museum objected because the students would not then have easy access to the museum's original works of art.

SMITH: Are we talking about the mid-fifties?

WITTMANN: Yes, about mid-fifties; I don't remember the exact date. Both the museum and the university basically wished to continue a relationship. The university made plans to construct an art building on campus, but they never quite got around to doing it because there was always greater demand for other facilities, and the museum made no charge for art studio space for university students in its building. Finally, the university agreed to reimburse the museum for most of the tuition for their art students, but still made no allowance for the art studios.

SMITH: So the museum was completely responsible for hiring the teachers—the

university had no oversight?

WITTMANN: At that time they did not. The instructors were still on our payroll, they were still our faculty and still subject to our regulations; however, there was a gradual development toward joint hiring. Eventually, and this happened only recently, the museum and the university agreed that the university would take over our faculty, subject them to the same standards as professors at the university, give them faculty rank, and pay them on the university scale. Students continued to take all art classes at the museum. The museum continued to provide space for classrooms and the lecture halls, offices for the art faculty, slide equipment and the slide library for art instructors, and free use of the museum's extensive art reference library. Greater communication developed between the trustees of the university and the museum. University reimbursement to the museum increased, and the museum was freed of expense and responsibility for the teaching staff.

In the meantime, art courses had become popular in Toledo. Space for art courses was exhausted, so the museum approached the university with a proposal to build a new building on museum grounds for art studios, lecture rooms, faculty offices, the museum's art reference library, and exhibition space for student art. It was suggested that funds be jointly raised (about $20 million) to build a new building, and to renovate existing museum galleries. This suggestion was

accepted and the joint campaign was successful. It was agreed that the museum would take charge of construction, and we would jointly choose an architect. When the building was completed, it would be turned over to the university. It would be their building, with the understanding that they would keep it up in perpetuity. We therefore freed ourselves of the day-to-day maintenance. This also cleared much space within the museum building for other uses.

The museum formed a committee of which I was a member (I was still a trustee of the museum, although I was living out in California by that time). I recommended a California architect I greatly admired, Frank Gehry. Faculty and students liked this recommendation, and in the end they voted in favor of him. However, museum trustees who were raising funds for the building felt that it might be more appropriate to have a new building closely related to the museum design of 1910. From California, I wrote a long letter about Frank Gehry and why he was so important and sent it to the director of our museum asking him to present it to the trustees at the meeting where they discussed the architect.

SMITH: Was that when Roger Mandle was director?

WITTMANN: Well, it was really David Steadman. Roger had initiated the idea for a new building, but he resigned to join the National Gallery. David Steadman, his successor, was director, so it was up to David to sell the project. He read my letter about Frank Gehry to the trustees. I wrote that I felt Gehry

should be designated because he understood that buildings should be built from within. Gehry's first thoughts concerned how the building would be used, what was going into the building, and who was going to occupy it; then he would build an "envelope" around that. The letter apparently was so persuasive that Gehry was appointed.

Gehry came to Toledo and looked over the space. He not only considered the building, but also the surrounding area—the museum, the land around it, the neighborhood—and came up with several interesting ideas. For instance, Gehry said that we should leave the cobblestone street in back of the museum because it was the only cobblestone street left in Toledo. So that's still there, and one of the old houses that was built by the architect who designed part of the museum was left standing back there. Gehry advised us to keep that building for offices or whatever, but not to tear it down; it was a good building of about 1915 or 1920. Gehry then designed the new studio building. As the building progressed, some of Toledo's more conservative residents objected and said, "There aren't two walls that are straight; they all go off at angles." The faculty and students found the building attractive and useful, and Toledo's public became very fond of the completed building. The university takes great pride in managing it. It has become an important art center adjacent to Toledo's beloved museum.

So, really, this has been the development from a simple program where it

was just an idea of Mr. Libbey's, in the very beginning, to a semiserious program when I came, to a much more serious program as I went on with it, and finally through my successors, Roger Mandle, and then David Steadman, and with the University of Toledo's help, it's become one of the best, most closely related programs between a good state university and a museum. The two work well together, it's been a great relationship, and I can only say that it's going to become even better as time goes on.

SMITH: As you were developing this, did you have models that you could look to of a close relationship between a general museum and a university?

WITTMANN: No, there were practically no models with such a close alliance. Cleveland, for instance, is a big city with a big museum.

SMITH: And right across the street from Case Western.

WITTMANN: Right, and some of the curators at the Cleveland Museum of Art teach courses at Case Western Reserve. But there was no closer relationship than that. They were paid by Case Western Reserve to teach. There is a Cleveland School of the Arts, one of the best studio art schools, which is near the museum but not closely related. The education program at the Cleveland Museum consists of classes for children and lectures in the galleries; that's the more usual pattern in most museums.

SMITH: But as the Toledo Museum focused increasingly on the university age

group, what happened to your classes for children and older adults? And what about docent training?

WITTMANN: Large numbers of children came to the Saturday studio classes—an average of over two thousand children every Saturday. All classes were free. As long as I was there it continued more or less in that way. When Roger Mandle became director in 1977, he felt that the children's classes were too large, as did many of the instructors. They felt they really couldn't teach that many children, and they asked that the classes be reduced in size. Roger agreed to this and the classes were reduced. A fee for supplies was introduced, but there was still no charge for tuition. We continued classes for nonuniversity adults for many years, when the faculty was still museum faculty, using the same instructors. This was free, but if you wanted university credit, you paid tuition to the university. Then the university took over the faculty and now there is tuition and credit for all adult classes.

I don't know whether I've mentioned docents before, but the docents became one of the strong factors in art education in the galleries of the museum. When I first came to Toledo in 1946, the Junior League of Toledo was seeking a new "project." In their terms, a "project" was a program they could conduct for three years, and then turn it over to the community to continue. They asked my advice for a museum project. I replied, "We would prefer a volunteer program

in art education with no terminal limit. The museum is an ongoing operation, and being an instructor in the galleries at the museum is a very important responsibility." In 1933, when I started my career at the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, there was little money at that time for instructors, so volunteers were recruited from the Junior League of Kansas City, and this group called themselves docents. The word docent of course is a term which means teacher—it comes from the Latin, and it's a term that was used in German universities—not very often in universities in our country. So these Kansas City volunteer women called themselves docents. A volunteer was a docent, and the professional was an instructor, paid by the museum—docents were unpaid.

Well, I explained all this to the Junior League in Toledo and said, "I'd like to start a similar program in Toledo that would be called Museum Docents. Training would be rigorous. Docents would not be permitted to lecture to children until they knew the museum's collections of art. The museum would offer a training program to include not only a knowledge of art but how to speak, and how to talk to children. The Junior League agreed. I think about fifteen volunteers became the first docents of the museum. Our best art history teacher, Kathryn Bloom, taught the group. Kathryn Bloom had come to us from the Minneapolis Museum of Art. She was a skilled art educator who some years later resigned to head the national program of education for the Junior League in

New York. Following that successful program, she headed a Rockefeller Foundation program in art history.

After meeting the volunteers Kathryn said to me, "Do you realize that half of them were art history majors in college? They know as much about art history as I do. What they don't know is how to talk to groups, especially adults. It's pretty easy for them to speak to children because they're mostly mothers and they probably know more about how to talk to children than most of our young unmarried instructors."

Kathy Bloom continued to teach and lead the docents for several years. The docents enjoyed their volunteer service and became a cohesive, dedicated group. The docents group grew over the years and always wanted to do more for the museum. At the end of about five years the docents took on more responsibility by starting a new program to develop museum membership. They organized a new volunteer group, open only to former docents—the Art Museum Aides. This second group of volunteers took over the annual museum membership drive. That campaign still continues and has developed the largest membership ever in the history of the museum. This is a great success story of a dedicated group of women docents, out of which grew the Aides, which enlisted many other volunteers in the community to solicit members for the museum. The docents have continued and still supply most of the gallery lectures. Personnel

has changed and grown over the years. Volunteer services now make possible many activities that the museum could not otherwise present. A splendid success story of a few dedicated women in 1947, to which hundreds of successors have continued, some daughters and granddaughters of the founding docents.

[Tape VII, Side Two]

WITTMANN: As the gallery education programs grew, the museum wished to bring students from all public and private schools in the area. We found that some schools couldn't afford bus transportation to the museum, so we initiated an annual request to museum members to give an additional contribution each year for a bus fund to bring children from all schools. This annual solicitation continues to be successful. I don't think there are any children in the community who cannot come to the museum if their schools so desire.

The gallery education program continued to become more structured. Many schools come for a series of four or six visits a year. The visits are related so that the children at the end of that year really have a pretty good comprehensive idea of basic art, and also a good idea of what's in the Toledo Museum of Art.

SMITH: With all this experience in education directed towards children and the relationship with the schools that you've developed, to what degree have you been involved with the Getty's discipline-based art education project? I'm

skipping ahead—

WITTMANN: When I first joined the Getty, in 1979, as adviser and trustee, the curators dominated the museum and refused to have lectures in the galleries. The galleries are rather small, and they felt lecturers and audiences would overwhelm the galleries. So the Getty docents only talked outside the building at the end of the long pool in front of the museum. Their talk was a brief introduction to the history of the museum and what it contained. It was a welcoming talk. This has changed more recently, I think mostly through the leadership of our present director, John Walsh. So now there are specialized docents who have been carefully taught by the curators. This will probably be enhanced in the new Getty Museum, because the galleries will be larger.

You have also asked about the Getty discipline-based art education program. That was started by Lani Lattin Duke, who was brought to the Getty by Harold Williams to start a new education program. I first met Lani Duke in Washington. She and I implemented a program initiated by Congress to indemnify works of art borrowed by American museums for temporary exhibition. Congress agreed to self-insure works of art borrowed for special exhibitions by American museums. Lani Duke was at that time employed by the government and I was a member of the National Council on the Arts. I requested to work with her to establish guidelines to implement this program. So she and I

jointly established guidelines and I served on the initial committee to oversee the program. The committee, made up of museum professionals serving a three-year term, considered conditions of shipment and the museum's ability to handle works of art safely. To this day, so far as I know, there have been no claims for payments for damages or loss, against that system, so Congress is content.

When Lani became head of the new Getty education program, she developed a new concept that art history should be part of school programs. She first approached a few schools that were willing to experiment, mostly in southern California. Through special summer programs paid for by the Getty Trust, teachers were shown how art could be taught as part of the regular curriculum. Many public schools of course had taught drawing. Lani Duke's concept was that art history could be tied in with general history. For example American art could illuminate American history. This was not a new idea in museums, but it was a new idea in most schools. Discipline-based art education was a new term used by Lani to describe her concept. Soon educators in various parts of the country took up the idea and programs were introduced all over the United States.

SMITH: What I want to turn to now is the extent to which you began to consider degrees in and of themselves as indicators of quality. I assume that when you started out you did not concern yourself with whether or not somebody

had a degree.

WITTMANN: Not too much. In the forties and fifties at Toledo we required a B.A., and most of our instructors had a master's degree, but a Ph.D. was not considered necessary.

SMITH: If we could expand this beyond the educators to include also the curators, as a museum administrator, what was the process by which you were probably not thinking about degrees very much to the end point where degrees became a more and more important way of evaluating people who were coming to you?

WITTMANN: Well, I think it's just a question of evolving and changing. You have to consider the whole growth of the museum profession, if you can call it that, from the thirties on. When I began my museum career in 1933, no one considered a degree beyond B.A. or M.A. as necessary. I've talked earlier about Paul Sachs at Harvard and what he meant to the museum profession. For a long time he placed almost all the curators in museums of America, and I don't think he himself had more than a bachelor's degree. What one knew about art, whether one knew a bad picture from a good picture, whether one understood how to care for works of art and whether one was interested in presenting art to the public were factors that were considered important.

By the late thirties and forties it became almost imperative for graduates to

have a Ph.D. to enter the academic world, but it was still rather uncommon in the museum profession. Most curators still did not have Ph.D.s, and this tended to divide universities and museums. Professors urged their most learned students to enter universities rather than museums. This was a great change from Paul Sachs's pre-World War II generation. Sachs urged everyone to go into museums. So there was this kind of dichotomy in career goals. Most of the graduates I employed as curators at the Toledo Museum of Art had a master's degree. That seemed perfectly adequate in the forties and fifties. I was interested in how they looked at works of art, how good they were at arranging exhibits, and how good they were at catalog writing.

SMITH: To what degree did you make those determinations based on a personal interview and your sense of an "eye" for a person? And to what degree did personal recommendations from people you knew and trusted count?

WITTMANN: That's a difficult question to answer. I think that both were factors. When I needed to employ museum personnel I usually traveled to colleges in the East, which I knew better than some others nearby. Toledo is really not in the Middle West; it's the "Near East," as we say. I consulted with professors at Harvard, Smith, and other colleges and universities. Many recommendations came in that way. Our senior curator at Toledo just retired a few weeks ago. I employed him, I guess, around 1950. He had a master's

degree. He was our first and only curator for a long time because I did most of the curatorial work myself in the early days.

SMITH: This is William Hutton?

WITTMANN: Bill Hutton. He left us to become director of the art museum at Manchester, New Hampshire. He found he didn't like being a director at all and went to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, where he spent a year or so, and then I called on him one day when we were in England and asked him if he didn't want to come back. He did. So he came back to us and stayed with us until he retired. Bill Hutton started out knowing very little about works of art themselves, but he grew to become a great expert. He was in charge of conservation for all of Toledo's art.

Roger Berkowitz, now the Toledo Museum's assistant director, and also our chief curator, is a young man who I first met at the University of Michigan in their art program. After his M.A., he joined Toledo for a year, and then returned to Michigan for his Ph.D. He completed all except his dissertation when he decided to return to Toledo. I don't think he's finished it yet. In this case, he may have advanced farther and quicker in a museum than in a university, but I believe he's an excellent curator, a natural at it. He knows art, he's got a good eye, and he knows how to install art in the galleries. He also happens to be a good administrator and that's the reason he became assistant

director. However, today I think it's rather rare to find a young curator joining a museum without already having his Ph.D. We've just hired a young man to be a successor to Bill Hutton, and he has his Ph.D. He also has a very good "eye" for art.

SMITH: I had two more questions that relate to education programs, and the second one will sort of move us into how you trained young museum professionals. The first one is specific. In 1976, one of the last things you did as director was to establish the museum research center. How did that relate to the kind of overall conception of the museum as a place for art education?

WITTMANN: I felt that it was important that we were by that time producing catalogs of works of art in the museum; I had edited our European painting catalog, as well as some of the catalogs of special exhibits. In order to produce the European catalog, we used several curators for specialized research, and several scholars were engaged in full-time research for this and other later catalogs, such as that for American painting. So it seemed to me logical to develop a research center as such, and several things happened. We had formed a print collection, which I don't think I've talked about, a collection of old master and contemporary prints, through the gift of one generous man who I'll talk about later. In doing so we had created a print study room and a print storage area because prints can't be exposed to daylight, and that is really a research project.

The art reference library, one of the best art reference libraries in our part of the country, was also in the research center.

The glass collection, which I haven't really spoken of yet, is large. It was so extensive that only a part of it was placed on public view. We then built a research glass center, which is a kind of library of glass, arranged chronologically and according to type. Collectors come to research and compare the extensive examples of glass housed on shelves in the glass study room. All these elements combine to form the research center.

SMITH: This actually moves naturally into my second question, which concerns the concept of the teaching museum and how that relates to education and collection development. You did view the Toledo Museum of Art as a teaching museum, and I guess not every collection operates that way. I mean, for instance, I don't think the Frick is a teaching museum.

WITTMANN: No, it's not a teaching museum, but it's a superb, carefully selected art museum. The adjoining Frick Art Reference Library is one of America's most important art reference centers. Nor is Toledo a teaching museum. It's a museum which believes in education both for its visitors and for young professionals. Remembering my own young days in the museum profession, I realized it was very hard for young people to get started. If they applied for a job, the first thing the employer would ask was, "Well, what

experience have you had?" They would answer, "None, we're just out of college, we don't have any experience." So the employer might reply, "Go get some experience, then come back and talk to me."

So I decided to organize a one-year program at Toledo for promising college students in art history. I gave them a year to learn about our museum. They were paid as a full-time instructor. At the end of that time they could stay with us, take another job, or perhaps pursue graduate study. Their commitment to us was for one year. As Toledo was a medium-size museum, these young graduates could be placed in every department to learn at first hand how museums functioned. So during this first year there was an opportunity to learn what being a teacher was like, what curators did, and they even learned a bit about business administration.

They were given an opportunity to present an exhibit of their own. For example, Stephanie Barron, who now is the curator of contemporary art at the Los Angeles County Museum, became a Toledo intern just out of Smith College. She was a strong-willed, very aggressive and active young lady, and she helped put on a very good exhibit called *Still Life Painting*. After her year at Toledo, Stephanie moved to California, found a position as a curator at the Los Angeles County Museum, and through her own efforts and growth, and her own intelligence, she has become the chief curator of contemporary art and was

responsible for several extraordinary exhibits of German expressionist art, the so-called "degenerate" art, as Hitler called it. She never returned for graduate study. In her case, she didn't feel it necessary. She is at present, acting director of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Kevin Consey was another intern in the Toledo program. (I tried to have two or three each year.) I remember asking him, "How'd you get through college? Did your family support you?" He said, "No, I worked my way through. I was a truck driver." He was large and strong and looked like a truck driver—but with a real sense of leadership and an understanding of art. He was a naturally good speaker with an outgoing personality. He stayed with us for the year internship program and then left us for the San Antonio (Texas) Museum of Art. It was just opening and he became its director.

SMITH: Just like that?

WITTMANN: Just like that. It was a contemporary museum and he made it a very popular art center in the community. So much so that he was invited to become director of another newly-established museum at Newport Harbor in California. The museum developed quickly under his leadership and after a few years he was named director of the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, which embarked on a new building program. He is very successful there. So there's another case of a man who never went beyond a B.A. or M.A. degree.

He has never stopped long enough to continue further study. He's just one of these good universal souls, a real entrepreneur. That's part of being a museum director, but not all. You must also understand and like art and people. He may not have become a great curator, but he is a good museum director.

But the average curator now almost has to have a Ph.D. to get hired. If he doesn't, he will only be able to go to a very small museum. The larger museums now prefer Ph.D.s.

SMITH: This does impact on the publications; the catalogs have become much more like books than they used to be.

WITTMANN: They are. Museums depend on curators for scholarship and for extensive catalogs. For example, a director or curator may develop a concept for an exhibition. The curators then organize and borrow the works of art, plan the display and installation, and perhaps write the voluminous exhibition catalogs. Today catalogs are often written by one or more curators or scholars, writing different sections. Often many of the new concepts in revising the history of art have come first in museum catalogs.

SMITH: Is there anything that pops into mind offhand?

WITTMANN: I'll cite one of the first shows I got involved with, an exhibition on seventeenth-century French paintings [*The Splendid Century: French Art 1600–1715*], jointly presented in 1960 by the Metropolitan Museum, Toledo, and

The National Gallery of Art. At the time it was organized, French painting of the seventeenth century was almost unknown—or forgotten by scholars. We knew of eighteenth-century French painting, we knew about the nineteenth century and the French impressionists, but the seventeenth century was almost unknown territory. There were a few young scholars in France under the direction of the Louvre's chief curator of painting, Pierre Rosenberg, who prepared the catalog, with 166 entries, for the three American museums. It was an interesting if not wildly popular exhibition. It was not what Tom Hoving was later to call a "blockbuster," but it was a serious scholarly show, and this was the first time that anyone in America had a chance to see a group of seventeenth-century French paintings. Those young men who wrote the catalog are today the leading curators in France. Pierre Rosenberg is now director of the Louvre. Many of the French curators also teach in colleges or universities in France.

To cite a recent catalog, in 1992, Theodore Stebbins, curator of American painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, presented an exhibition of American artists in Italy 1960-1914 [*The Lure of Italy*]. When he was writing the catalog he wrote me, "Your show was the original pioneering study. I have to lean on you because of the exhibition that you did back in 1951 with Dr. [Edgar P.] Richardson of American artists who went to Italy [*Travels in Arcadia: American Artists in Italy, 1830-1875*]." Dr. Richardson was then director of the Detroit

Institute of Arts. It was a rather small catalog, significant for its new information on a forgotten aspect of American art. You never know what influence a catalog will later have. Stebbins's catalog was much more extensive (200 entries). Several excellent curators and scholars wrote the entries and this catalog will take its place in this generation, but our small catalog was the pioneer in this field, still also significant in the history of American art.

SMITH: But in that case the main thing must have been the selection of the pictures.

WITTMANN: Yes, well that's the essence of all exhibitions—who selects the art and then who writes the catalog. The catalog is important because it is a continuing record of the exhibition. It often becomes a miniature history of a specific section of art and often contains new and unpublished research.

SMITH: But to return to the Toledo Museum and the development of its collection, when you got there in 1946 and began to survey the collection, it does not sound like it was a collection that one could really use to teach the history of Western art.

WITTMANN: Not at that time, but before we talk of the collection, I want to discuss one other aspect of giving students an opportunity to learn about museums. The University of Michigan, in Ann Arbor, is near Toledo. Soon after I arrived in Toledo, Charles Sawyer, who had been an art history professor

at Harvard—I knew him during the war when he was also in the OSS—had accepted a position at Yale University as chairman of the art department there. Subsequently he left Yale to come to the University of Michigan and he became chairman of the art department and also director of that university's art museum. He and I discussed a joint program for graduate students in art history. A masters degree program was jointly developed. Following a B.A. or M.A. degree at Michigan, graduates would spend a year at the Toledo Museum gaining professional experience in several kinds of museum service, followed by one more year of graduate study at Michigan. A special M.A. from Michigan was awarded in museum administration. The museum accepted only one student each year. I personally oversaw the students' work with the museum's curators and gave them an opportunity to organize programs. These students also returned periodically during the year to meet with Professor Sawyer.

The joint program continued for some years. Many of the students went on to museum careers. Roger Berkowitz stayed at Toledo and is now the assistant director at the museum. Patricia Whitesides has been the museum's Registrar for many years. Others went on to positions in other museums. It seems to me that this was the most serious use of the museum as a teaching museum, allied with a great university. Roger Berkowitz is now a great expert in decorative arts, and he now acquires much of the decorative arts for Toledo's

museum. There has been no place where he could study decorative arts in a university; it just isn't taught. So he had to learn by studying objects in the museum. He had a good background in art history, but he had to learn about decorative arts in the museum.

[Tape VIII, Side One]

SMITH: I wanted to discuss some aspects of your thoughts about exhibition style and presentation, the organization and hanging of the materials—the museum as an environment. I was wondering, how did the museum look when you arrived and how did it look when you left?

WITTMANN: That's a complex question. As I think I said before, the building had tripled in size in 1929, during the Great Depression, because Mrs. Libbey, the founder's widow, relinquished most of the money bequeathed to her so that the building could be greatly enlarged. It was her suggestion that a new and large concert hall (the peristyle) and additional art studios and classrooms and art galleries could be added to the existing building of 1926. The concert hall was named the peristyle because it was designed to look like an outdoor Greek theater. Its stage is large enough to accommodate a symphony orchestra of any size, because Mrs. Libbey wanted a concert hall where the people of Toledo could hear great orchestras. It made the museum a real cultural center for Toledo. The peristyle seats 1,750 and the acoustics are excellent.

SMITH: In terms of your galleries though, how did they look?

WITTMANN: The first gallery that you entered was a large entrance hall with a marble floor. Originally it had some plaster casts of classical sculpture in it, but by the time I arrived in 1946 it was an empty space with only a large bronze sculpture by Paul Manship. In the first gallery to your right as you entered was a gallery of Barbizon paintings and beyond that was a gallery of beautiful French impressionist pictures. Included there was a beautiful Monet, a Manet, a wonderful Degas, two Van Goghs, and others. William Gosline, the museum's president, played an important role in developing this aspect of the museum. He traveled a great deal to New York and France during the depths of the depression, and art dealers were very happy to find a museum with money for art and somebody who was interested. He persuaded the museum to commission a consultant in France who could propose contemporary pictures. In this way the museum was able to acquire some postimpressionist pictures. We got a strong, Blue Period Picasso, and several other good pictures and also some that we never want to see again!

Now Billy Gosline had an old theory that pictures would look better if they were all framed alike. So he and the museum carpenter developed a very simple wooden frame, and it could be painted almost any color. All the frames for the impressionist and postimpressionist pictures were removed and replaced

with this singular standard frame. Gosline felt that different gold frames detracted from the pictures. The old and often valuable frames were not destroyed, but they were stored in the museum.

If you entered the museum and turned left, you came to a gallery of glass cases, and in the cases were little objects from Egypt—the objects the Libbeys had acquired in Egypt and given to the museum years before. The contents of the cases were trinkets, little bits of jewelry, little faience pieces, small cosmetic jars. Mrs. Stevens, the wife of the museum's first director, had made this installation. When she visited the museum for the last time before returning to live her last years in Paris, she explained to me that a mirror reflecting the inscribed underside of an ointment jar had come from her compact case. Each object had a label hand painted by Mrs. Stevens—often rather imaginative.

Beyond that was a large high-ceilinged "classic court" with a marble floor, which held more Egyptian objects, several mummies and other tomb objects and a few pieces of ancient glass, also in glass cases, presented years before by the Libbeys. In other galleries were more Barbizon pictures and some excellent Renaissance paintings of great quality. That was about the extent of the collection when I arrived. There were no decorative arts, no furniture, almost no sculpture, a few oriental objects. So that was what the museum was: the paintings that were least important were shown nearest the front door. There was

no chronological sequence. There were a few nineteenth-century American paintings given by a local collector, Arthur J. Secor. During World War II, when it was not possible to buy very much else, the museum bought some American contemporary works of art. They're pictures of the thirties.

SMITH: American Scene type of things?

WITTMANN: American Scene, yes. Examples by [George] Luks, [Everett] Shinn, Bellows, Sloan and others—nothing abstract, nothing very modern. The museum also developed an annual exhibition of American contemporary paintings following the tradition of the great Carnegie international exhibits, but Toledo's exhibitions were usually of American art. Some pictures were bought for the museum from those shows. I carried on that tradition and for several years had these so-called summer shows of contemporary American art. I began to bring in more modern art, and we did buy several good paintings from those exhibitions.

SMITH: Tomorrow we'll get into collection development, but in the remaining time, could you talk about your conception of how to present a work of art. I mean, did you like white walls or colored walls, damask walls, or—

WITTMANN: The walls had been covered in the thirties with a kind of natural burlap material which over the years had turned dark brown, darkened with sun and age. The sky-lit galleries did allow uncontrolled sun. So I said we needed new wall covering, but as there was little money for that purpose, I proposed

painting the walls in different soft colors so that we could begin to differentiate between the various collections, and this was done.

So the walls were painted with light colors, off-white, and I began to move the impressionist paintings to the galleries nearest the entrance. For years I couldn't get the money to re-cover the walls with new fabric. All I could do was paint over the old burlap. As I say, I painted the walls different light colors—softly grayed tones—to key them to the pictures for specific galleries. Finally the covering became so old that the walls had to be recovered. At that time I recovered them with an off-white, coarsely-woven material called "monks' cloth." Toledo's museum galleries were forty feet long and thirty feet wide by twenty feet high. It took a lot of material. David Steadman, Toledo's present director, has recovered all the galleries with fresh dyed, textured fabric. These recently recovered walls, with beautiful soft colors, are magnificent. David has a great sense of color, and now the colors of the wall background complement the pictures more than ever before. So that's the history of the wall coverings.

SMITH: Were you limited by funds, or was there also an aesthetic preference for kind of an off-white texture?

WITTMANN: No, it was more or less just an aesthetic idea of what would be best for the works of art that were going to be shown.

SMITH: How do you feel about period rooms?

WITTMANN: I'm not very fond of them. Most are highly artificial because of the artificial light. It isn't like sunlight, which changes all the time, so I never really liked them. I always thought they were too artificial. When I arrived in Toledo there was already one room that had been given by one of our early donors, who lived in Switzerland. She gave the Toledo Museum something called the Swiss Room, which was made up of various elements. But later I bought a period room for the museum, which I probably should talk about later on because it was such an adventure and an experience.

SMITH: That's the Chenailles room?

WITTMANN: Yes, a small, rare, early seventeenth-century room from the Chateau of Chenailles.

SMITH: Actually, I was thinking of something more along the lines of period rooms such as the Cleveland Museum has, where you go into these little alcove rooms and they've got paintings and decor from 1880 and then 1910—

WITTMANN: We didn't have the possibility of doing that at first. Our collections were too limited. If we had introduced each newly acquired painting separately, few visitors would be interested. But if we could first gather together enough newly acquired paintings to make a gallery of seventeenth-century French paintings, or eighteenth-century French paintings, and introduce a newly installed gallery with a gala opening, that would stir up interest—it's really public

relations. Quite early, I began to rearrange all the galleries in the museum in chronological sequence. However, I began near the entrance, with the most contemporary art and then went in time through succeeding galleries. Now this is just the reverse of what you might think one would do. I didn't start with the earliest art and follow to the latest, I started with the latest and went to the earliest. I wanted to show visitors contemporary art first, and then lead them back through history. So eventually it became a museum that was historically arranged, by period, and also by country. European art was generally in one wing, and Greek, Roman and Egyptian art were on the other side of the building.

SMITH: I was going to ask you about your concept of spacing. How much space does a work of art need?

WITTMANN: I feel that a work of art needs quite a bit of space, and that's probably a contemporary aesthetic. We know that in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries it was generally felt that the more paintings you could put on the wall the better. All the great academy shows in London or Paris in the nineteenth century stacked the pictures from the floor right up to the ceiling, and private collectors arranged pictures in the same layered fashion at home. Paul Sachs, in the thirties, said to his museum students, "Pictures are best placed at eye level, and placed fairly far apart so that spectators could look at one picture at a time, and not be distracted." My generation was influenced by his

teaching—the more space the better. Now, my successors are beginning to feel differently and pictures are sometimes layered in special exhibitions, but usually not in galleries of the permanent collections.

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[Tape IX, Side One]

SMITH: In earlier sessions, we discussed your evaluation of the Toledo collection as of 1946 and your recommendations for augmenting it. I actually had not asked you how the plan was received. Was there any discussion or debate over the kind of emphases and focuses that you were proposing?

WITTMANN: Not really, it wasn't a debate. Not much thought had been given to a general concept for the long-term growth of the collection. The collection was limited, mostly pictures, and no thought had been given to collecting decorative arts and furniture, so there was no formal plan in place.

SMITH: But as Godwin was the museum's director, wouldn't he have set the taste for the museum?

WITTMANN: That is an interesting question. I liked Blake Godwin very much. We got along very well together, probably because his principal concern was with the overall business of the museum. He was interested in how the money was handled and what could be done to make the funds of the museum grow. He and his wife enjoyed travel in Europe, and they would go to see works of art, but I think essentially he was somewhat unsure of his own taste. More than that, I don't think he really had a long-range plan for the growth of the museum's collections. It seemed to me that Billy Gosline was very much interested in

collecting. I think he'd left a lot of this to Billy, and when Billy died two months after I came there, Godwin continued his primary interest in the business side of the museum and what the museum could mean to the community. The collecting of art did not seem to be his first interest, and there was no overall plan for direction in the growth of the collection.

SMITH: So as of '46, or '47, you had a plan for how to change the museum.

WITTMANN: Yes, but I had no idea how much could even be accomplished. I didn't really know in those days exactly how much money there was, or how much would be available for art. Perhaps one could say collecting at that time was opportunistic. Here was a general museum, attempting to show the whole history of art from Egypt and Greece and Rome up to the present day, but there were great gaps which had simply not been considered. There was no real thought given to the overall development of the museum collections as such.

SMITH: What kind of acquisitions budget were you working with?

WITTMANN: I'm not sure that they ever had a budget in those days. I think art funds were simply appropriated as needed. To understand that you have to remember that Mr. and Mrs. Libbey's wills both stipulated that no more than 50 percent of the income from their bequests could be used for the operation of the museum, and all the rest would have to be used to acquire works of art. That immediately set up 50 percent that could be used only for art each year. That

income grew and varied with time, and new bequests and gifts arrived slowly. The museum staff was very small in those days. As I said, there were no curators, only a small staff of less than fifty. So in fact, almost 90 or 95 percent of the funds bequeathed by Mr. and Mrs. Libbey were available for art. We didn't need to take 50 percent for the operation of the museum. If there weren't enough works of art to buy, which there weren't in the beginning, immediately after the war, the money was simply put aside for later art acquisitions. As a matter of fact, a large amount of money was put aside during the war years. For a long time, I was unaware of just how much money was available for art. There was no specific budget, but the money was there if the need could be justified.

SMITH: In your report on the collection, you had outlined specific areas where you felt the collection ought to be expanding, and I'd like to go over some of these and have you discuss the process over the thirty years by which you set out to achieve the goal of having a significant collection in each of those areas. The first is seventeenth-century Dutch painting.

WITTMANN: That's a good place to start, because when I arrived at Toledo, there was only one seventeenth-century Dutch painting in the collection, and that was an early portrait, by Rembrandt, acquired by Mr. and Mrs. Libbey and subsequently bequeathed to the museum. It's a fine early portrait. I think the first Dutch seventeenth-century picture that I considered for Toledo was a

painting by Pieter de Hooch [*Courtyard, Delft*]. This picture was offered to me in 1948 by the New York dealers, Rosenberg and Stiebel, who had recently acquired it. Early in the twentieth century it had belonged to J. P. Morgan, a great collector. It is a delightful picture of two women in a courtyard, and in the background is the great tower of the church at Delft. Pieter de Hooch came from Delft. The picture was in very good condition and had a good history before Morgan; it had been published in several scholarly books and was reasonably priced.

SMITH: What was a fair price in those days for a painting like that?

WITTMANN: It was probably about $60,000, something like that.

SMITH: What was the relationship of that first acquisition to the *Age of Rembrandt* show?

WITTMANN: The *Age of Rembrandt* came later—1966. It had been preceded by another splendid exhibition, *Dutch Painting: The Golden Age*, in 1954. That exhibition was organized together with several other museums. So you see, Toledo had a continuing interest in Dutch art. Both exhibitions contained great Dutch paintings borrowed from museums in Europe and America. SMITH: The second area I wanted to talk about was seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French painting.

WITTMANN: Toledo's interest in this area was stimulated by the 1960

exhibition, *The Splendid Century*, which I mentioned earlier. We began to acquire paintings of this period whenever and wherever they became available, which was not often. It was also at that time that I was able to acquire the French seventeenth-century room which was mentioned earlier, some French ceramics and French furniture and sculpture.

French eighteenth-century paintings and decorative arts also came slowly over a period of years. After the war excellent French pictures owned by the Vienna Rothschilds came into the market. Often they were offered by Rosenberg and Stiebel. Toledo acquired an important Boucher, significant examples by [Nicolas] Lancret, [Jean-Baptiste-Joseph] Pater, and other pictures came from other sources. As these gradually came into the market we became one of the principal buyers of pictures, ceramics, silver, and furniture before it became of general interest. There was little competition from private collectors except for the Wrightsmans. The pictures we acquired not only had good histories but they were in good condition and were significant examples of the artists' work.

I want to say just a word about the competition. Although many of the pictures we sought were not particularly desired by other collectors who were interested in French impressionist pictures, our greatest competitor was probably Baron Heinrich Thyssen, who I had met on our first trip to England after the war. My wife and I went to call on him because his father had formed a great

collection in Lugano, Switzerland, and we wanted to see it. The father was no longer living, and his son Heinrich was quite young. The handsome house had been built by the senior Thyssen, who had added galleries where the paintings were exhibited. Heinrich drove up in a splendid sports car, jumped out of it and said, "Hi, I'm Heinie Thyssen." We saw the collection and had a good time, and we've kept in touch with Heinrich ever since.

The family fortune came from the Thyssen steelworks in Germany, which had been heavily bombed and seized by the Allies at the end of the war. So everything that Heinrich, a Swiss national, might have had was destroyed. However, it wasn't too long before the damaged remains of the steelworks were released, and as someone said, "Heinie's back was to the wall, but the wall turned to gold." He was a very successful businessman, a greater businessman than his father, and is today one of the wealthiest men in the world. He has also become possibly the greatest private collector of art—both old masters and contemporary art. He visited us in Toledo to see what we were collecting, and he became a real rival because he went to the same dealers. Often, when I'd go see a dealer, he would say, "Heinie Thyssen's just been here, and he has the same interests as you." Occasionally I would get there first.

In 1954, I was shown a pair of paintings by Fragonard that came into the market. They'd been painted as a pair—both of children playing. I said to the

dealer, "The pair are delightful and also rare, but the price is too high for Toledo. Would you consider selling only one to us?" The dealer replied, "Yes, we'll split them, only you'll pay a little bit more than whoever buys the remaining one." The dealer then revealed that Baron Thyssen had called on him the day before; he was fascinated by the pictures and asked if he would reserve them. The dealer told Thyssen he couldn't, because he knew I was coming in the following day, and he told me I had the first choice, and Thyssen would probably buy the other one. Well, that was not easy. First I had to obtain permission from the museum that we could buy one of them, so I did that. Then I couldn't decide which one I wanted because they were both equally good. It made no difference to Thyssen. In the end I chose *Blindman's Buff*, and the next day Thyssen bought the other painting, *The See Saw*.

Over the years I came to know many private collectors in Europe and in our country. Some I met when we borrowed pictures for our temporary exhibitions. Often these friendships developed slowly over many years. We bought several paintings from collectors who had been lending to Toledo exhibitions for years. One good example is a splendid painting by [Meindert] Hobbema [*The Water Mill*]. Hobbema was one of the great landscape painters in seventeenth-century Holland. This picture had been borrowed by Toledo for the exhibition *The Age of Rembrandt*. It was owned by a very wealthy Dutchman

who had no reason to sell. Sometime after that exhibition, however, we said to him, "If you ever want to sell that Hobbema, we hope you'll give us first chance to buy it." Often we made such suggestions to collectors. Sometimes we got the picture, sometimes we didn't. But in this case, years later, H. E. ten Cate, the owner, called me up from Holland and said, "I've decided to sell my Hobbema, and you once said you wanted it. I'd like to offer it to you. I know my picture would then be in a good museum." I told him I would come and see it the next time I was in Amsterdam, and I did. It was in a bank vault two or three storys below ground. I looked at the picture again and saw that it was in as excellent condition as ever. It was one of those pictures that had hardly been touched—perfect condition, but yellow with old varnish. After negotiating on the price, the Toledo Museum acquired the painting.

Another fine example of Dutch seventeenth-century painting also came through my travels in Europe—a great painting by [Jan] van de Cappelle [*Shipping off the Coast*]. In this case, I knew about the picture through my Dutch friend Bob de Vries, who I had known during the war and who was at that time director of the elegant Dutch national museum the Mauritshuis, in The Hague. The Mauritshuis had a comprehensive collection of paintings of great quality, but very little money to add to the collection. In Holland one year, Bob said to me, "If this painting by van de Cappelle is offered to you, you should buy

it, because you'll never find one that's in such good condition or so important. We Dutch think it's the greatest picture van de Cappelle ever painted. I would love to have it in my museum but I know there are no funds to acquire it." It was offered and Toledo Museum did buy it. So this was a case where my own opinion was reinforced and strengthened by the head of another museum in Holland who more than once had helped me to find works of art in Europe.

SMITH: In general terms, did you search out paintings, or did the dealers come to you with what they had?

WITTMANN: Generally I had to search extensively, both from collectors and dealers. The best and most important dealers didn't come to me. They waited for me to seek them out. And there usually followed a long period of testing my knowledge before the best of their art was shown. Art dealers are generally not aggressive, but willing to wait for the client who understands what they have to offer.

In England, great families often bought from the same art dealing firm over generations, and if they wished to sell they often offered the art to that same dealer, who took it on commission to sell, just as a stockbroker would handle shares of stock. In my early days at Toledo I visited a great many English collections. Once I visited [Christopher Lewis] Loyd, who was a young man with an important collection of old masters inherited from his father. Later, I

wrote to him, "If ever for any reason you wish to want to sell, I hope you'll let us know, because Toledo would like to have almost any of your collection." He replied, "Thank you for your interest. I don't know of any reason why I should sell. I intend to keep the collection."

Well, two or three years later, I heard from the dealer [Geoffrey] Agnew, in London, that Loyd had decided to put some of his pictures on the market, and he had said to Agnew, "Now you have to offer these first to Toledo, because Otto Wittmann is interested in them. If he doesn't want them you can offer elsewhere." The pictures offered were a series of six panel pictures of lives of the saints [by Gerard David]; three from the life of Saint Nicholas, and three from the life of Saint Anthony. I asked Agnew why Loyd decided to sell. His answer was, "He's decided to get married, and he wants to provide a settlement for his wife." I went to London and saw the six pictures at Agnew's. Then Agnew said to me, "I have to tell you something. I'm English, as you know, and I've always represented English museums. The museum at Edinburgh is a good client of mine, and so is the principal who supports that museum, the great private collector, Lord Crawford. He came in the other day and saw these pictures, and now he wants to buy them for Edinburgh. Since there are three pictures relating to the one saint and three pictures related to the other saint, I think I can divide them. Then you could have three and Edinburgh could have

three." I said, "That's okay, but how are you going to decide who gets the first choice?" He said that that was one of the problems. He tended to lean toward English collectors and English museums, and he wanted to consult with Loyd too.

So they got together on it and finally said, "We don't mind three of them leaving the country, but we do think that three of them ought to go to Edinburgh and they ought to have first choice." Agnew, to kind of console me said, "You know, England has strict laws against the export of works of art, and it may be that you won't be able to export either group, but if we sell three of the panels to Edinburgh, I'm sure that I can persuade the government committee to allow the other three to go to Toledo." So Edinburgh got their choice, and they took the Saint Nicholas set—what I would've chosen, because Saint Nicholas is a saint we all know. Toledo got the other three, which are the only three great pictures by that artist in our country. They are very rare, in splendid condition, and we are delighted to have them.

That's how searching and negotiating takes place: you try to see as many private collectors as you can, you hope they remember you, you hope some time they will be able to offer you something, although most of them never do. And so these instances I'm telling you about are rather rare. Dealers always have stock, and they have to get to know that your standards are high; then they will offer you only their best pictures. The same dealers will carry a lot of stock that

you wouldn't even want to touch, but they don't even show inferior examples once they know your standards.

For this reason, I made sure collectors and dealers knew what we were acquiring. I initiated a new publication, *Museum News*, issued about four times a year, which included reports and illustrations of recently acquired works of art. *Museum News* was distributed widely throughout Europe to collectors and dealers, so when they saw me they would say, "Oh, so you bought this, did you?" The publication helped people to understand the Toledo Museum. It was not well known in Europe at that time. Many people in Europe didn't even know where Toledo, Ohio was. In organizing these early large temporary exhibitions, I had to persuade collectors that Toledo was between two large cities, Cleveland and Detroit; it was a small city in the heartland of the industrial part of America. There were millions of people in the area. If we could present an exhibition of significance and importance, visitors would come not only from Toledo but also from Cleveland, Detroit, and Ann Arbor, where the university was. Almost all Toledo Museum exhibitions drew audiences which were larger than the total population of Toledo.

[Tape IX, Side Two]

WITTMANN: Another avenue to acquaint European and American art collectors and specialists with the Toledo Museum was through the recognized leading art

periodicals. Denys Sutton, editor of *Apollo* magazine, one of the leading art publications in England, devoted an entire issue of this magazine to Toledo Museum of Art. Denys Sutton was one of the friends I met during the OSS days, and he remained a friend. In a special issue of *Apollo*, recent acquisitions were emphasized, enabling many to understand the growth and quality of Toledo's collections. French periodicals devoted articles on Toledo's acquisitions of French art. I have also been on the editorial board of the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, the leading French scholarly art journal.

SMITH: Was the situation you faced vis à vis dealers and private collectors affected by the turmoil of the mid-twentieth century? Was the art market and were dealers shaken up as a result of the crisis from 1930–1950? Were dealers unsure of what they were doing, or were there new dealers emerging?

WITTMANN: There were some new dealers emerging, but almost all of them, in the old-master field at least, were older dealers. The firm of Rosenberg and Stiebel, which I spoke of and which meant so much to me in the early days in New York, had come to the United States toward the very end of the war. During most of the war they were in England, and before that, Holland—they had both gotten out of the Hitler-controlled areas. They knew their future would be in New York. They wanted to get there and they did. When I got out of the service, I went to some of my old friends to ask about new dealers and they all

said, "Go see Rosenberg and Stiebel." I've already recounted my first meeting with them.

Probably the most important international dealer I knew was the Wildenstein firm in Paris, London, and New York. The firm was started by the great-grandfather of the man who's now in charge. Their stock of paintings, sculpture, furniture and decorative arts was extensive and excellent in quality—if you knew what you wanted! I first knew Georges Wildenstein, grandfather of the present member in charge, Guy Wildenstein. He was a great scholar, member of the French Institut, and very shrewd. I once asked him, "Mr. Wildenstein, you are wealthy and you have a large stock of pictures. How do you invest your money?" He replied, "Invest money? I never invest money. I put it all in works of art. Every penny I get, I put in works of art, and then I put them away." And I said, "Put them away? And you won't show them to me?" And he said, "No, they are to be sold by my grandson." That has always been the firm's policy. That is why they have always had important art to offer. Some of the best works of art I ever bought for Toledo's museum came from them.

There were new dealers who were dealing in impressionism and modern art. These were the ones who were making the big money and beginning to sell to private collectors. There was a man named Sam Salz, who operated only from his apartment. He only attracted people with a lot of money, who wanted to

collect. And what did he offer them? Great French impressionist pictures at high prices. But he knew what people wanted. We went to see him several times. He was nice enough to show us what he had, but his prices were so outrageous I don't think we ever bought a thing from him. That type of dealer grew in numbers, but the old-fashioned, old-master dealers began to lose out because there wasn't enough trade, and that's why they were so glad to see me. I was interested in this kind of thing because I was trying to build a museum that would show what happened in the past as well as what's happening in the present.

SMITH: I was wondering, in terms of your collecting priorities, if you would have made the same choices if you had gone to Kansas City or Cleveland or San Francisco?

WITTMANN: No. This was all based on my feeling that the Toledo Museum could become a great general museum if it could fill in the gaps in history that I have explained. Cleveland had a large number of private collectors, more money than Toledo, and was already a great museum with a great director, William Millikan. It didn't need the kinds of art Toledo needed. The same is true of Kansas City; much of that museum's art was bought in the thirties, when it was easily available at reasonable prices. Each museum has its own character, and each is different. Museums are not like public libraries, which may be quite

similar because all libraries may buy copies of same book, but two museums can't buy the same work of art.

SMITH: What if you had wound up in a place like the McNay Art Institute in San Antonio, or the Pasadena Art Museum—you could have, since on some levels they were museums that were just starting out. Do you think you would have followed a similar path, or would you have gone in a different direction?

WITTMANN: I don't know that I would have had the opportunity. I have always felt most grateful for the opportunity to buy as freely as I did. I don't know any other museum director that's ever had that much freedom. Our trustees were community leaders who were also good businessmen, but not necessarily art collectors. They left that to the professionals. Their policy was, "We're not going to tell you what to acquire for the museum. We want the museum to serve the community. You are here to build a great museum and to provide an administration of qualified professionals to serve the public."

SMITH: And you seem to think that's an unusual situation.

WITTMANN: I think it's very unusual.

SMITH: But you did cultivate potential donors, didn't you?

WITTMANN: I don't know how much I cultivated them. I think they generated their interest in collecting art on their own. Donations came to the museum because they believed in what the museum was accomplishing and wanted to

help, with art or funds.

SMITH: I wanted to ask you about some of the named collections that you have. We've discussed the Libbey collection, what about the Arthur J. Secor collection?

WITTMANN: Arthur J. Secor was one of the early trustees of the museum, a friend of Mr. Libbey. He collected Barbizon pictures and a few American pictures of the nineteenth century, and eventually gave his collection with the restriction that the pictures be shown together in galleries known as the Arthur J. Secor galleries.

SMITH: Maurice Scott?

WITTMANN: Maurice Scott was the father of Mrs. Libbey. She designated in her will that art acquisitions made with her bequest be named in his memory.

SMITH: Now was that targeted on American paintings?

WITTMANN: Not deliberately, no. When we began to buy American paintings it was arbitrarily decided to use her funds for that, plus decorative arts—almost all of the decorative arts have been acquired with her funds. Mr. Libbey's money has been used chiefly for European paintings.

SMITH: The next collection I have listed is the George W. Stevens collection.

WITTMANN: George W. Stevens was the first director of the museum. There was very little money in those early days. George Stevens had the idea of forming a collection of printed works, early books—single pages from the

Gutenberg Bible—things of that kind. With a few dollars he bought enough to furnish an entire gallery. The George W. Stevens Gallery of Manuscripts and Printed Books still exists in honor of our first director.

SMITH: How does this relate to your print collection?

WITTMANN: The print collection is a separate story. Various donors have given us prints, and occasionally a few were purchased. One time, when I was at Harvard interviewing potential instructors for Toledo Museum, I met an old friend who was an administrator in the Houghton rare book library there, who said to me, "Otto, I know you're in Toledo and I've heard enough good things about what you're doing to know that you're building a great reputation for that museum. As a matter of fact, I know a man who some day is going to telephone you and offer you a collection of Rembrandt prints." I asked him to tell me the man's name, but he said, "No, I can't. If he ever knew that I'd mentioned this to you, you'd never get a thing. When the time comes he'll call you." Nothing happened for several years, and when I saw my friend again in Cambridge and I told him the print collector had never called, he replied, "Oh, he will, he will. I talk to him every once in a while, he's got it on his mind. He will call when the time comes." Nothing happened.

Then one day, I received a call in my office. "My name is Hitchcock, I live in Youngstown, Ohio, and I have some prints that you might like to see

sometime, but I don't want you to make a special trip over here; it's too far, it's way across the state, and I wouldn't want you to do that, but some time when you are over this way, call me up and come see me, I'd just like to talk to you." My wife and I decided we had to find a reason to visit Youngstown. We had some good friends in Cleveland, which is not too far from Youngstown. I phoned and asked if we could visit them the following weekend. I then phoned Mr. Hitchcock, explained we were spending the weekend with friends in Cleveland, and asked him if he would mind if we stopped and saw him. He said, "Oh, I don't want you to do that especially for me. You can see me some other time." Finally, he agreed and said, "Well, if you insist, why don't you come over and you can have lunch with me." So we found his house, which was adjacent to the golf club. We drove up a long entrance to the house, and as we were about to get out of the car a tall, slender man leaned down into the car window, looked at me and said, "You're not so frightening." And I said, "Why did you think I would be?" He said with a big grin on his face, "Well, I thought all museum directors were frightening."

So we met Mr. Hitchcock and he showed us his splendid Rembrandt prints. He had many other prints, Whistlers and others, all of high quality, some on the walls but others in print boxes. After I complimented him on his selection of prints, which were of great quality and value, he said, "Yes, they're fine, I

like them, but I'm really worried about theft. I'm really very much afraid somebody's going to steal them someday." I tried to reassure him, "They won't, you know, you've got good security here. You've had them for a long time, and nobody knows how valuable they are except you." And he said, "I know, but I worry about them. You know, I've always had the idea that I wanted to give them to the Toledo Museum of Art. Would you take them in your car and take them back to Toledo with you? I don't want to keep them here, except I'll keep a few on the stairway that are hanging in frames, just to remind me of them, but the rest of them I want you to have." I said, "Mr. Hitchcock, that's very generous of you, but I wouldn't dare do it because, as I told you, I'm going to spend the weekend with friends near Cleveland, and they'd be in the back of my car for several days and it would be more dangerous than in your house. Besides, even if I were going directly home I wouldn't do it because it's too dangerous. If you really want the Toledo Museum to have your prints, I'll send a curator over with an armed guard to get the prints safely to the museum." He replied, "Oh, I'm serious about it, I know that. You just arrange it and I'll let you have them."

Then we went to the golf club, had lunch, and Mr. Hitchcock began to tell us about collecting. He explained that he was a bachelor, and after the war he decided to do something about collecting art. He said he didn't know much

about it, but somebody told him about collecting prints, and he decided that was a field that he could afford. So he began to buy Rembrandt prints from an excellent old firm in New York, Kennedy and Company. He'd buy one or two Rembrandt prints a year. I think he put aside something like $40,000 a year to spend on prints. Gradually, over the years, as prices went up he probably bought less. But it became a collection for his own pleasure. He was of course the uncle of my Harvard friend, and I think his nephew had probably advised him on his early print acquisitions. He said, "My nephew always said you were a good museum director, but I also know about the Toledo Museum because my mother grew up in Toledo and knew Mr. Libbey. I met Mr. Libbey once when I was a boy, and I never forgot what a wonderful man he was. I never saw him again, but my mother often spoke of him. So that's why I want to give my prints to Toledo, instead of the Youngstown Museum. As a matter of fact, I have stored in my basement the only thing that's left from our house in Toledo, and that is a marble Victorian mantle, which I saved when the house was demolished. I've always thought that that mantle piece ought to be in your museum." This came as a surprise to me, and I asked to see it, but he didn't want to show it to me down in the basement, so that was that.

Mr. Hitchcock didn't want to give us all of the prints at once. He said, "I'm going to give them all to you but I'm going to do it slowly. Each year, my

accountant tells me how much I can give to charity, and I will give you that number of prints. You have to get the appraisal, you go back to Kennedy and Company where I bought them and you ask them what they're worth today, and you decide which prints you want each year that will come up to about $40,000. I'll give approximately $40,000 worth of prints each year and gradually you will have all of them." I told him the museum had only very inadequate space to keep and exhibit prints. What we really needed was a print room. I explained to him that a print room should contain storage shelves for the prints and large tables for examination of the prints. He said, "That's interesting, a good idea. I'd like to give funds to build it in memory of my mother. I don't want my name revealed in any way—only my mother's. She is the one who knew Mr. Libbey. All the prints should also be gifts in her name, Grace J. Hitchcock." So together with a local architect we designed a print room—we had no print curator at that time. The print room is known as the Grace J. Hitchcock Print Room, in honor of the donor's mother.

Later, Hitchcock reminded me, "Now, about that fireplace mantle . . . " I said, "Aha. I'll put it in your print room for you." We shipped the mantle to Toledo, although I had never seen it. It was perfectly beautiful, not too big, a splendid white marble Victorian mantle. It was placed at one end of the print room and created the sense of a private room. Mr. Hitchcock did indeed give us

all his prints, he gave considerable money, and when he finally died the museum received a large bequest from him. This is a story of how interest, acquisitions and funds can come in the strangest ways. Had these pieces not all fitted together, had I not known Hitchcock's nephew without knowing the connection, and had he not said to his uncle that Toledo is a good museum with a good director, and had his uncle not known Mr. Libbey, none of it would have occurred.

SMITH: I was wondering, why wouldn't Hitchcock have given his prints to the Butler Museum?

WITTMANN: I asked him that question. I said, "Look, you have a wonderful museum right here in Youngstown, why don't you give it to them?" He said, "Oh, I used to try to get to know them, but they never would come see me and they didn't seem to care for European art. They're only interested in American art."

SMITH: The mantle also raises an interesting question about the problem of collecting furniture and decorative arts—the whole question of the quality of the piece. How do you determine what pieces you want to collect and what you don't want?

WITTMANN: That aspect of it seemed very important to me. When I first came to Toledo the collection seemed somewhat uninteresting and moribund.

The museum was principally a picture gallery. There was no furniture, little sculpture, no decorative arts. In considering how to make a museum interesting, one had to relate to visitors. Many people don't have original pictures in their houses, but everybody has furniture, everybody has dishes, and often people take great pride in them. And if one is going to try to get people in the community interested, perhaps one should start with things visitors know about—furniture, ceramics, and other objects which they might have in their own houses. Certainly the pictures are important in museums, but I thought maybe we had to lead our visitors into paintings through the decorative arts. I had no great knowledge of the decorative arts—it was not a subject taught in colleges in my day. I decided the best way to learn was from the reputable dealers who sold this kind of art.

The first piece of period furniture I acquired was an eighteenth-century French table from Rosenberg and Stiebel, who were major dealers in eighteenth-century French furniture because of their former European connections. Following the table came a beautiful Chinese vase with French eighteenth-century gilt bronze mounts. This came from a London dealer who had acquired it from a famous English collector. Next we bought at auction in London a French nineteenth-century table. It had been designed especially for a palatial house built in Paris in the nineteenth century by a courtesan, La Paiva. La Paiva

was the most successful courtesan of her day and became enormously wealthy. She felt she ought to have the finest house in Paris. The best architects and the best sculptors of the day designed this extraordinary house in the center of Paris. The house is now the Travelers Club of Paris, a splendid men's club (of which I was a member for some years, because it had an excellent restaurant).

Gradually, as we enlarged the decorative arts, I began to see that if I could find furniture of the period of our pictures we could then add furniture and sculpture to the galleries, all of which would provide a third dimension to the galleries and would also complement the pictures. I was a pioneer in this, no other museum was doing this here at that time. My friend Ted Rousseau, painting curator at the Metropolitan Museum, saw our new additions and decided to add furniture to his galleries. However, it was not easy in a large museum because each branch of art was so compartmented by individual curators who had little wish to share their treasures with other departments. This was an advantage for Toledo Museum, which was smaller and more centralized its direction.

Well, this was the beginning. I continued to look carefully at all objects of art offered by dealers in Europe and America. Many great works of art were brought in to complement the paintings and to enrich the galleries.

SMITH: Were you looking for typicality? Did you want a table that the aristocracy of the period or the upper bourgeoisie would have?

WITTMANN: I wasn't so interested in that as I was in having an object which would be big enough to show in our rather large galleries—as I mentioned, they're about forty feet long with twenty-foot ceilings. So a small object wouldn't work very well. As collecting developed, I began to buy Italian Renaissance furniture to go with Italian Renaissance paintings. I bought several Dutch tables to go with the Dutch paintings, and more French furniture to go with the French seventeenth- and eighteenth-century works.

[Tape X, Side One]

WITTMANN: So many beautiful decorative arts were acquired that it became time to develop two or three small decorative arts galleries adjacent to the paintings galleries. Sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century silver gilt cups, and very rare objects: French ceramics, English silver gilt and French eighteenth-century silver gilt objects were placed in closed, lighted cases in the new decorative arts galleries. They became "treasures" of precious objects. It was at this time that I bought that small French seventeenth-century room I mentioned before—the room from the Château of Chenailles.

It was difficult for me to find sources for particular art objects. For a long time I didn't know where to look for important old French silver. Finally a colleague said, "Oh, you go to Mr. Helft." Well, Helft is a common name, especially so in France, so I had difficulty locating which Helft. Finally,

somebody said, "Oh, yes of course, that's Jacques Helft. You'll never see him unless you make an appointment, because he operates from his Paris apartment." He was the purveyor of most of the great French silver in the Metropolitan Museum, which was donated to them by a collector in New York, and he's the purveyor to most of the great collectors in Europe, including my friend Baron Thyssen. So I wrote Helft from Toledo and called on him when I was again in Paris. He was a perfectly delightful old man who did have a beautiful apartment in the center of Paris, filled with beautiful objects, most of which he kept for himself, but some few were "available." He liked modern art and knew many of the best French artists who were his contemporaries—Picasso, Matisse, Monet—and from them acquired splendid small pictures for his apartment.

I soon found out that Jacques Helft was the man who knew where all the best silver was. He's written more about French silver than anyone of his generation and is the author of the most comprehensive books on silver marks. All French silver by law had to be marked by the maker, by a date stamp, by the region, and by the government. It had to be assayed by the government so they knew how much it weighed, and the government stamp was put on it, and then when it was sold it finally got one more stamp on it. Helft told me all this and he showed me some of the books he had written of marks he had recorded and identified. Silver was made all over France and everybody had his own mark

because it was part of the guild system. Anybody who became a silversmith had to have been an apprentice for a long time, but finally, when he was on his own, he then got his own mark—a very, very interesting thing.

So I began to go to see Helft often and I learned a great deal from him. He spent his entire life in a very narrow field. When buying he had to put his own money on the line and then guarantee to his client that the object was genuine.

SMITH: Did you have an ideal image of what a museum should look like when you began at the Toledo Museum? Was there some standard that you used to judge how you were developing the physical feeling of the museum?

WITTMANN: I suppose I looked to some of the great European museums, where pictures and furniture and decorative arts are combined in the galleries. Also, I saw many of the great houses of England and France, usually beautifully furnished with furniture and objects as well as important paintings. In that respect, the summer we spent with the American school at Attingham in England, viewing great houses and their contents with England's greatest art experts was invaluable to me. As I mentioned, I really felt that I could entice more people to be interested in art as such if I could show them art that was more related to what they might have in their own homes, such as tables, chairs, dishes, silverware, and so forth. And then I could lead them into the paintings, which were perhaps

a more sensitive form of art.

SMITH: But isn't there a general attitude expressed in the art world that museums get judged and ranked by their paintings?

WITTMANN: That is true, to a certain extent. I did try to point this out to the Getty Museum at one time. Certainly decorative arts and furniture were important for them to acquire, following Mr. Getty's interest in great French furniture, but I tried to emphasize that visitors do look at the walls; they look at the paintings first.

As I mentioned, Toledo was the first American museum to integrate decorative arts with paintings. Now, almost all museums do. The Getty Museum also followed that path. When I came there as an adviser in 1979, the furniture galleries were quite separate from the paintings galleries. I tried to persuade the curators to combine their collections, and it was a long time before any decorative arts were put in the paintings galleries because the curator of painting didn't feel furniture should be in painting galleries. The curator of decorative arts was more amenable. Today, if you walk into any of the galleries at the Getty Museum, you'll see distinguished furniture and excellent sculpture, as well as beautiful pictures on the walls—all combined to form a beautiful whole. So I think that one can still say that people do look at pictures because they are hung at eye level, but visitors now also look with pleasure at the

decorative arts.

SMITH: In a competitive market, how quickly could you act to buy when you found a work of art you felt the museum needed?

WITTMANN: Museums can't always move immediately, and so it is customary to ask a dealer to reserve an object or picture. The dealer then on his honor will not sell it to another client without your permission. But of course, he won't keep it on reserve very long. To dealers in Europe I usually asked for three or four weeks, because I needed time to discuss the acquisition with our art committee. Often I saw thousands of objects during a European trip, reserved only a very few, and either bought or released the reserve as soon as possible. Dealers got to know my integrity and ability to act relatively promptly.

The other Toledo advantage was a precept of my predecessor's, Blake Godwin. He said, "Let's not buy anything unless we have the cash and can pay for it immediately." Some museums bargained: "Yes, we want to buy it, but we will have to pay for it over a long period." Dealers will often rather unwillingly accept this, but it means they have to ask their bankers to lend them money to buy additional works of art. Toledo's policy was to pay cash within thirty days after receiving a good bill of sale, a guarantee that the seller owned the art, and it was genuine and legally imported and exported. Often we could negotiate a better price because of prompt payment.

SMITH: Did you have a situation where you wanted to buy something but you knew you had to go get a donor to complete the purchase price?

WITTMANN: No. This is the other way in which the Toledo Museum differed from many other museums in the country. Many museums do have to depend on finding a donor, or they have to persuade a donor to buy and then give the work of art to the museum. In our case, because both Mr. and Mrs. Libbey bequeathed their funds in such a way that a percentage had to be used for works of art, the money accumulated over a long period of time because the museum didn't always spend the entire amount—especially during the war years. Millions of dollars were allocated for works of art; we couldn't use the money for anything else. So after the war, when I began to buy for the museum, funds were available.

Many other museums often must depend upon a donor's taste and money to buy, or donors already have art they prefer to give to the museum; this gives those museums a certain character that reflects the donors. In Toledo there was only one major donor, but that was the daughter of Billy Gosline, Margaret McKelvy. She collected modern art, and she bought mostly what I recommended to her. She filled her beautiful house with wonderful, bright, lovely pictures, which she then bequeathed to us upon her death. If there is any kind of homogeneity in Toledo's collections, it is because the buying was in the hands of

professionals. I did most of that and it meant that it was one man's taste, and it has a certain character because of that. Also, the money to buy was available promptly. Perhaps this unique situation gave the museum the feeling of a private collection principally formed by one professional—a kind of connoisseur's collection formed for a museum's public visitors. Maybe that's what evolved by no direct plan. Almost two thirds of the art in the museum was acquired during the thirty years of my tenure in Toledo.

It was the combined result of one man with the courage of his convictions, willing to buy in areas not yet collected, backed by supportive trustees, at a time in history when because of wartime upheavals significant art became available and the museum's large financial reserves could be used to make Toledo one of America's ten finest museums. It could not have happened before, nor will it ever happen again.

SESSION SIX: 10 FEBRUARY, 1993

[Tape XI, Side One]

SMITH: The question I wanted to start out with today came from reviewing the tapes from yesterday. It struck me that one of the key things that you were saying was that the growth of American museums in the post-World War II period, and of Toledo as a prime example, was the result of pictures that had been in private collections moving into the market. In fact, that may have been the primary factor that allowed museums to expand their collections so rapidly. Is that a correct conclusion to draw?

WITTMANN: Yes, I think it is an interesting conclusion, which I should have mentioned. Wars have always displaced works of art, and World War II was unusual in that works of art were not generally seized as spoils of war. In fact, as I have mentioned before, the U.S. Congress actually passed laws which prevented our country from using works of art as spoils of war. Whereas, as you know, in almost any other war in history, art had been among the prizes of war. But art was displaced, nevertheless, for economic reasons and because of the upheavals caused by war. Art was moved for safekeeping, and while architecture was damaged in World War II, little art was actually destroyed. There was a great deal taken by the Germans, and probably by the Russians too, but works of art came on the market after the war because of economic reasons. People

needed money, so they sold works of art. That is one of the prime reasons that so much art came into the market after World War II. That period is now over, but in the period we are talking about, when I was collecting for Toledo, a great amount of art came into the market. Art moves where money is. As I said yesterday, much of the most important art is in England because England was the richest country in the eighteenth century, and at that time Italy was one of the poorest. Many great examples of Italian art moved into England simply by the attraction of money, not through war. After World War II, money was centered in America; we were probably the wealthiest country. So art naturally followed. That is one of the main reasons why so much European art was acquired by American museums, which had funds, or at least had donors who were willing to buy and give works of art to the museums.

I will speak just briefly about objects that came into the Toledo collection at this time, which were varied in nature and which formed the basis for making Toledo a general museum. I'm going to start off with early art, and continue through medieval, Renaissance and beyond. First of all, I want to speak of Egypt, the earliest civilization: there wasn't much art that left Egypt during the period that we're talking about, but there were some works of art already in American museums which could be transferred. For instance, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts wanted to publish catalogs of their archaeological surveys

in Egypt at the beginning of this century. They raised the necessary funds by offering Egyptian sculptures which had been acquired in Egypt early in the century. They offered these sculptures only to other museums, not to the market. Toledo had the opportunity to acquire a splendid, seven-foot high Egyptian granite sculpture at that time. There would have been no other way that I could have acquired a figure of that size and importance, so I felt very fortunate to be able to buy this great sculpture from the Boston Museum.

SMITH: Is that the one of the Pharaoh Tanwetamani?

WITTMANN: Yes, Tanwetamani—about 650 B.C. It's complete except for his head. We don't know where the head went. Most of the heads got knocked off during later periods, some of them were later identified in other museums or collections, but the head of this figure has not yet been found.

SMITH: Did you have to compete for that piece?

WITTMANN: Yes. The Boston Museum notified all major museums that a silent auction would be used as the fairest method of placing these rare objects in other museums. I guess we must have offered the largest sum because we got the figure. I was terribly keen to get it because I saw no other way to obtain a major piece of Egyptian sculpture that was larger than life-size. After all, Egyptian sculpture is known for its large scale. This was also a beautiful sculpture, and a great work of art.

As for Greek vases, we have an excellent, carefully selected collection in Toledo. We had practically no Greek vases when I came there, but it seemed to me that this was an interesting area to explore, because at that time there were a great many Greek vases coming into the marketplace. I went to see Dietrich von Bothmer, curator of classical art at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and explained that I knew very little about Greek vases. I asked him if one could acquire good examples, and how. Dietrich's said, "I'll be glad to help you. We have a collection of thousands of Greek vases in the Metropolitan Museum. All I'm interested in now are a few very rare and somewhat esoteric vases not yet represented here. If you would agree to not to try to buy those pieces, I would then help you to buy some very good representative pieces, which we don't need because they would duplicate examples already in our collection." So as vases came into the market, he began to make suggestions. One of the chief sources those days was the dealer Herbert Cahn, in Switzerland, who had begun a series of public auctions of classical art. He was an expert in classical art and offered annual auction sales of important examples of Greek and Roman art. I attended those sales almost every year and bought many Greek vases.

How did I decide what to buy? Shape was important, and condition, date, and the subject matter of the drawings on the vases. Often the drawings revealed how people lived centuries before Christ, but more often repeated the Greek

myths. The quality of the drawing and the signature of the artist were important. So we formed an important collection of Greek vases over a period of several years—slowly and carefully. I also acquired several Roman sculptures and a few other Greek and Roman objects, but the most important part of Toledo's classical collection was the vases.

SMITH: You had to build your classical collection basically from scratch, as I recall.

WITTMANN: Yes, the museum had only a few pieces.

SMITH: The typical thing would be to go for statuary, just because that's what people think of when they think of Greek and Roman art.

WITTMANN: Yes, that's right, but mostly we acquired vases because it seemed to me that this was an area where significant examples could be acquired at reasonable prices. I remember Dietrich von Bothmer saying to me, "Buy what you can today, because there may never be an opportunity in history to do this again. There are large numbers of vases coming into the market, and for that reason prices are relatively low. It may never happen again."

SMITH: So they were coming into the market again out of private collections in England and Italy and France?

WITTMANN: Yes, but vases were also coming from various sources in Italy. One of the reasons the museum bought at auction was that the vases were

exposed to the public months before the sale through detailed, illustrated catalogs. We felt that so long as the objects had been offered to the public, and could be seen before the sale by everyone, there was adequate opportunity to question any object offered before the sale. Indeed, there were cases where objects were withdrawn and returned and not sold.

SMITH: With the vases, were you competing with others? Were there other museums that were moving in the same direction?

WITTMANN: There were some museums at that time that were collecting in that field, notably Richmond, Virginia; there were also a number of private collectors. Many excellent private collections were formed at that time, mostly in New York, often with the advice of Dietrich von Bothmer. Many have since been given to the Metropolitan Museum.

SMITH: Just to pursue this a little bit further: how much expertise did you have to develop on the question of Greek vases in order to pursue this collection?

WITTMANN: I didn't consider myself a great expert or scholar. I did rely on the greatest expert in America, who was in fact von Bothmer, and on the knowledge and integrity of one or two dealers.

SMITH: You must have developed your own opinions about the vases that you wanted to acquire.

WITTMANN: I did. Again, there is the question of connoisseurship and

aesthetics. I wanted representative types, beautiful examples, and I wanted vases in top condition. There are certain types of vases that I felt should be included: some were for carrying water, some for wine, and some were for cosmetics. They were after all objects for use. I didn't have great expertise, I had to depend upon my own eye for objects that would be representative in our collection and that were also attractive and beautiful. As to the genuine nature of the objects, I had to rely on Dietrich and the few expert dealers.

I acquired an Assyrian relief of a winged deity. There were other important Assyrian reliefs in universities and museums in our country that were acquired by scholars and missionaries when there were no export restrictions. In the nineteenth century an archaeologist from Amherst College brought back several of these reliefs. Finally, Amherst decided to sell one of their reliefs in order to buy other art. We were able to acquire an excellent example of Assyrian art from the Palace of Ashurnasipal, about 860 B.C.

I want to turn now to Far Eastern art, Chinese art especially. There were only a few examples of Chinese art in Toledo's collection before the war—several excellent paintings and a few ceramics. Earlier, I discussed the Oriental collections in Kansas City, and the great amount of Chinese art that came through Larry Sickman, the young man who became the curator and later the director of the Nelson Gallery. During my four years in Kansas City I became fascinated by

Chinese art and learned everything I could about it. As I mentioned earlier, one of the great purveyors of Chinese art in Europe at that time was C. T. Loo. He had established galleries in Paris, New York, and London and he frequently visited Kansas City. When he died, probably in the fifties, there were no heirs and the collection had to be sold for taxes, so a lot of Oriental art came into the market quickly. I bought what little I could for Toledo. (At that time there was little interest in Chinese art in Toledo.) I was able to buy several tomb figures of the eighth century—Tang dynasty figures. They're interesting because not only are they great examples of ceramics, but they tell us much about the life in China at that time. They were small figures made to be placed in tombs—camels, horses, warriors, and courtiers. As the railroads were built in China in the twenties, these figures began to be excavated and sold in quantity in Peking. So I bought objects from C. T. Loo's estate, and I bought other examples later on, so we finally had enough to make a gallery of Oriental art in Toledo, which we did not have before. Now we have Chinese paintings and Chinese ceramics of all periods.

To move on to the medieval period in Europe. I have already discussed much of this earlier when I talked about the dealer Brummer, but I want to speak now of medieval painting. Once I began to collect medieval objects for the museum, dealers began to offer me paintings. Agnew, the London dealer,

offered me two panels by the important Flemish artist, Jan Gossaert, called Mabuse, painted 1621. I bought two wings of a triptych [*Wings of the Salamanca Triptych*]. The center element of that altarpiece is in the Hermitage, but the two wings I bought were of Saint Peter and Saint John the Baptist, with the Annunciation on the reverse. They were in extraordinarily fine condition. These two rare Mabuse panels were the first paintings that were offered me by Geoffrey Agnew, who said, "I want you to have something that people will remember as the first thing you ever bought—and you bought it from me." He was head of the firm and became a good friend.

The second painting I got from Agnew was a superb small altarpiece, the *Morrison Triptych*—also Flemish, about 1500. Here was a complete altarpiece, a center panel with two wings on which were painted Adam and Eve. When the wings were opened, on the center panel was the Virgin and Child, with St. John the Baptist on one wing and St. John the Baptist on the other. The altarpiece had belonged to the Morrison family in England, and scholars, not recognizing a name for the artist, had simply designated him the Master of the Morrison Triptych. Now there is a group of paintings attributed to the Master of the Morrison Triptych. So this was a key acquisition because it was a very beautiful and important object of medieval art.

SMITH: Was that a difficult piece to acquire in terms of the amount of money

that was required?

WITTMANN: No, the price was reasonable for a well-known, well-documented complete triptych of about 1500 in excellent condition. I mentioned yesterday, I believe, the story of the six panels, three of Saint Nicholas, and three of Saint Anthony of Padua. These are also early Flemish panels by a known artist, Gerard David, painted about 1500. As I said, we got one set [*Three Miracles of Saint Anthony of Padua*], and the Saint Nicholas panels went to Scotland.

To move into the Renaissance a little bit further: I was able to buy in England two panels by Luca Signorelli, one of the great Renaissance Italian artists. Signorelli was famous as one of the first humanist artists to paint the nude figure. That doesn't seem so rare to us any more but it was then. The humanists looked back toward Greece and Rome, and there found all the nude sculptures, and so they thought they would try to paint nude figures; this was rare at that time. In this case, Signorelli had painted, about 1498, a large picture, the baptism of Christ. Eventually it was destroyed and only a few fragments were saved. The two nude fragments I bought for Toledo were from that large painting, and they represent figures undressing in preparation for their baptism in the water. They're very beautiful and very rare—I don't know where one could find another Signorelli. While they're not complete pictures, they are very interesting because they are by Signorelli, which nobody ever doubted; they were

part of a large panel now destroyed; and they represent nude figures. So this again was an attempt not only to acquire significant art, but to relate that art to its time, in this way presenting a pictorial social history to our visitors. To paint the nude was rare in 1498.

Another important acquisition by a significant artist not well known today was Primaticcio's *Ulysses and Penelope*. Primaticcio was an Italian artist invited to the French court by Francis I in the 1530s. Most of his work at Fontainebleau was in large frescos, which are now very damaged. There was only one painting on canvas still preserved in good condition, recorded as "formerly collection Wildenstein." I asked Georges Wildenstein one time, about 1963, if he knew where the picture was because I felt it would be important to see. I had seen it in Anthony Blunt's great book on French art. Blunt said it was the most important picture by Primaticcio that was left from Fontainebleau. So, after some hesitation, Wildenstein said that perhaps he still had the picture in his vast stock, and he sent his assistant to search for it. The picture appeared, I spoke enthusiastically not only of its beauty but also of its historic importance for a museum. Wildenstein said, "I have never shown the picture, but since you noticed it in Blunt's great book on French painting, I will offer it, if you wish." I asked the price. Wildenstein thought and then said slowly, "As you have found it, and I have not thought of it since before the war, you may have it at the pre-

war price," which, of course was very low. Toledo's trustees agreed with little hesitation, and that's how this important picture came to Toledo.

I was able to acquire for Toledo other works of art by important artists who were almost forgotten. In London one time, about 1960, at Colnaghi's, an old English art firm, I was shown a large beautiful painting of *The Feast of Herod* by Mattia Preti, a seventeenth-century Italian artist. It was a beautiful, baroque painting of a dramatic biblical subject, but the figures were clothed in seventeenth-century dress. We were able to acquire the picture because the artist was hardly remembered at that time. However, no sooner had it left England than the *Burlington Magazine*, England's most scholarly art journal, criticized the National Gallery of London for having let it go. Today Mattia Preti is again well known. Quite a few examples have come into the market since the 1960s, none of them as important as Toledo's picture and now probably ten times as costly. So that was another example of where one's own courage was important. Again, the willingness of Toledo's trustees to acquire this unknown but important picture was important.

SMITH: Was it the quality of the picture alone that sold you, or was it because you could place Preti in the tradition of painting?

WITTMANN: Both. It was the *bravura* style of the seventeenth century and therefore a good example in art history, but also a significant composition, well

painted and in excellent condition.

Another example: this time a handsome large white marble bust, offered in England, artist and subject both unknown, but obviously of the seventeenth century. Again, Toledo was able to acquire it for a very low price, even though it was still in perfect condition. Toledo couldn't buy a sculpture by the well-known artist Bernini—there simply weren't any on the market. There were splendid Bernini busts in the great palaces of Rome, but there weren't any on the market and none likely to come into the market. Some years after the bust entered Toledo's museum, a scholar researching records of the Barbarini family in Rome discovered a record of our sculpture. It was a portrait of Antonio Barbarini, the Younger, about 1629, by Francesco Mochi, a follower of Bernini. This discovery was made by Marilyn Aronberg Lavin, who with her husband Irving Lavin, have spent a good part of their professional careers working on the Barbarini family inventories. The bust had formerly been published by [Rudolf] Wittkower and other Bernini scholars.

To return to paintings. An important large painting of *Venus and Cupid* by the seventeenth-century artist Guido Reni became available in 1972 in London. Guido Reni was a name to reckon with in seventeenth-century art history, but he had fallen out of favor by the twentieth century. There was only one collector I knew who was buying Guido Reni. Denis Mahon, a friend and an important

collector of seventeenth-century Italian paintings, was also a scholar and organizer of significant exhibitions of art of that period in Italy. He bought great paintings by rather obscure painters who had been very famous in their day and had almost been forgotten, so I consulted him about the newly discovered *Venus and Cupid*. The picture had been well known in the 1660s when it was known as *Il Diamante* because it had been painted for a goldsmith who exchanged a diamond for the picture. It had last appeared at an English sale in 1894. The present English owner had placed the picture for sale with Agnew's, with the provision that his name never be revealed. So Toledo acquired the painting. It is now recognized again as a masterpiece of Guido Reni, an artist once more well regarded in the art market by substantially higher prices.

SMITH: In our interview that we did with Kenneth Donahue, he spends a great deal of time talking about the acquisition of the big Reni that Los Angeles County Museum of Art has, and the difficulties he had with that.

[Tape XI, Side Two]

WITTMANN: Ken Donahue was a good friend of mine. He had a much more difficult time than I did, because the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, of which he was director for many years, depends a great deal on wealthy donors who sometimes feel they know more than the director. They tend to pass judgment, whereas my trustees, as I told you, took a much more businesslike

approach to things. Toledo's trustees said, as I've mentioned several times before, "We employ you as the professional, and we're not going to second-guess you." That was one of the reasons I was so very fortunate at Toledo. Consider Barbizon School paintings. Enormous prices were paid for them, often more than for Renaissance paintings. Now Barbizon pictures have lost popular favor to French impressionism and postimpressionism. But who's to say that that won't change, and maybe fifty or a hundred years from now, impressionism may also fall out of favor. Styles in paintings are affected by popular attitudes and tastes.

Sometimes these tastes can be affected by charismatic art dealers, like Duveen in the 1920s. He was able to interest American collectors in full-length English portraits, such as *The Blue Boy* and *Pinkie*, in Pasadena. Duveen is one example of how the market could be developed by a strong individual; usually, the art market is based on broader waves of taste and fashion. Professor Paul Sachs of Harvard used to tell us about John Ringling, the great circus man. Everybody made fun of him because he bought enormous pictures by seventeenth-century baroque artists. Now everybody understands that he bought great pictures, and the Ringling Museum in Sarasota, Florida, has one of the great collections of seventeenth-century painting in this country.

Have I mentioned before that almost the first painting I bought was from a Dutch dealer in London, a picture by Hendrik Avercamp called *Winter Scene on*

a Canal? In the seventeenth century, Holland was much colder than it is today. Today the canals rarely freeze over, but in the seventeenth century, the rivers froze, and people enjoyed the ice. There were ice clubs with tents for club members. Games were played on the ice. One game with a stick and small ball was named *kolf* by the Dutch. That same game later was exported to Scotland and was played on land instead of on ice, and of course it became golf. The Avercamp was an attractive picture with its tents and people enjoying various activities on the ice, some playing *kolf*.

SMITH: So that little historical detail would help you explain to the trustees—

WITTMANN: Of course they liked it. It's bright, colorful, and delightful. But Avercamp wasn't a well-known artist at the time. I think I must have bought the first good Avercamp in America.

And then there's the great Rubens [*The Crowning of Saint Catherine*], probably the greatest picture in our collection, which I've talked about before. That was a picture that had been seized by Hitler during the war years, and then it was reclaimed by its legitimate owner and put into the market in New York. It is considered to be the greatest Rubens in America. This picture had been first turned down by the Metropolitan Museum and by the Boston Museum, so it took a lot of courage to buy it for Toledo. It was less than a year after we bought it when Michael Jaffe, the greatest Rubens scholar of our generation, visited Toledo

as a young man and clearly identified our Rubens. Jaffe is an Englishman and a professor at Cambridge, and I recently met him at the Getty Center. He reminded me of his visit many years ago. I reminded him that we'd competed several times in England for pictures we both wanted for our museums. On one occasion we bought at auction a painting by Van Dyck, but the English wouldn't allow it to leave the country and Jaffe got it for the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. He said, "You know, Otto, you always had the reputation in England for two things: one, you seldom told an art dealer whether or not you liked his pictures; it was only when you wrote him from Toledo later to offer to purchase that the dealer really knew. The other thing was, you moved faster than anybody else." I said, "Okay, I don't mind that at all."

We bought [Gerard] ter Borch's great *Music Lesson*, a picture which had belonged to the Hermitage in Russia. In the twenties, when Russia needed money, a few pictures were sold. It was the only time any works of art were ever sold by the Hermitage. Andrew Mellon, who was then secretary of the treasury of the United States, bought most of them. They became the foundation of the National Gallery of Art, which was built with funds given by Mr. Mellon. However, a few of the Hermitage pictures went into the New York art market. Years later, Toledo was offered the ter Borch and bought it. So you just never know when and where these art works are to be found. That's why it was so

necessary to be free to travel so often and to keep in touch with what was an international market.

Going on to French seventeenth-century paintings, there's a Claude Lorrain we bought [*Landscape with Nymph and Satyr Dancing*], which, like the Rubens, had also been in the hands of Goering. Goering seized it in Paris and took it to Germany for his own collection. After the war it was in the Munich collecting point and was returned to the owner. We acquired it in New York.

I was talking to a Dutch dealer in London one time about Dutch paintings—Edward Speelman. I was looking at them when he said to me, "I have an unusual picture stacked up here in the corner. It comes from a friend of mine who wants to sell it." It turned out to be a Gainsborough landscape [*The Road from the Market*]. It was the last thing that I had expected to find in the hands of one of the most important dealers in Dutch art. He showed me the painting and explained, "I just have it on commission if any of my clients should want to consider it." I told him I liked it very much, and I had no trouble persuading the trustees because Gainsborough was a well-known name. But it was more than that: one can buy a good Gainsborough, one can buy a mediocre Gainsborough, one can buy a bad one—he was an uneven painter with many followers. But Gainsorough seldom reached the height of this picture. Its history is well known, its condition is excellent, and I feel it's one of his greatest landscapes. We didn't

buy a great many English pictures.

One of the first pictures I was able to acquire for Toledo (in 1951) was a painting by [James] Tissot, *London Visitors* (1874). Famous in his own day, Tissot was practically unknown when I saw the painting. It was in the hands of a German dealer, Robert Frank, who had come to England during the war years with little money but a good eye for unusual art. Tissot was almost his own rediscovery. Certainly I had never heard of the artist. *London Visitors* is a picture of several visitors on the steps of the National Gallery, London. So of course Frank offered it initially to the National Gallery in London, which had no interest in it. I later learned that Tissot had been a good friend of Degas. He went to London and lived there for many years, painting many pictures of fashionable women. His mistress appears in almost all his London pictures, including *London Visitors*.

SMITH: What was it about this picture that appealed to you? It was from, at that time, an unknown artist and from a period and a style that have yet to receive much critical recognition.

WITTMANN: I liked the unusual subject matter and the way it was painted. I thought it was a very attractive picture. The dealer was not well known, and the price was low—about $2,500.

Soon after, Robert Frank died, but his wife carried on the business,

specializing in these rather obscure artists. She owned many prints by Tissot, as well as other paintings, which were mostly sold through other better known Bond Street dealers in London such as Colnaghi's or Agnew's, where the prices were much higher. Today, after several major exhibitions and several extensive monographs, Tissot is an auction house favorite; his pictures command six-figure prices. Tissot, then, is a good example of the change of taste and change of fashion in my own lifetime. These pictures may not always be serious works of art, but they're usually beautiful to look at.

SMITH: But there were choices that you didn't make. It doesn't seem like you nibbled at the Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

WITTMANN: I bought several Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the sixties and later. I bought a Gilbert Stuart—the great American eighteenth-century painter probably best known for his portraits of George Washington. I bought a portrait of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the great hero of the War of 1812. Why did I do that? Because near Toledo is a town that's older than Toledo and it's called Perrysburg. It's still a delightful small town; many of our friends live there. It was there that Perry built his small wooden fleet, which he then led down the Maumee River and out into the Great Lakes where he defeated the British in a decisive naval victory. This is a great portrait by Gilbert Stuart, the leading portrait painter of his period. It had been on long-term loan to the Museum of

Fine Arts, Boston for many years. Upon the death of its current owner, his widow decided to sell the picture, and it was offered to the Toledo Museum by a New York art dealer. We acquired it not only as an excellent portrait of a famous man by Gilbert Stuart, but also because of its obvious local interest.

SMITH: How did you get involved in collecting American art?

WITTMANN: I had always liked nineteenth-century American paintings, but there were no courses offered at college. During the war years I met in the OSS a Yale professor of English, Norman Holmes Pearson, who had written and lectured on Hawthorne. Once, in a friendly discussion on art, he said, "You know, Nathaniel Hawthorne knew a lot about nineteenth-century American artists in Rome, because he lived there. He knew many of them and wrote about them. You ought to read this book *The Marble Faun*, his novel about these artists." So I read it toward the end of the war and was fascinated by it. I learned what I could about American art in the Glens Falls days.

When I completed the war service and had started life in Toledo, I soon met Dr. Edgar P. Richardson, distinguished director of the Detroit Institute of Arts and a specialist in American art. We somehow discussed our common interest in the Americans in Italy in the nineteenth century, and out of our discussion came the idea of doing a joint exhibition of paintings by those American artists who had worked and studied in Italy in the mid-nineteenth

century. Just to find the names of the artists who lived and worked in Italy was not easy. We finally compiled a list of about fifty names. Clearly this was the favored center for artists in the mid-nineteenth century.

European artists came to Rome during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. French artists established the French Academy there. But in the nineteenth century, artists from America went to Italy in great numbers to study—usually in Rome, sometimes in Florence. They studied great masterpieces in Italy along with the Italian artists. As expatriates, however, they tended to group together. They lived together and later most of them returned to America. Toward the end of the century, American artists went to Germany, where they studied in Munich; many artists from Cincinnati studied there. In the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, artists tended to gather in Paris and were influenced by French impressionism.

So we planned to research and exhibit the period of Hawthorne and the mid-nineteenth century in Italy. Many of those American artists returned to the Hudson River area, where they developed the Hudson River School of painting. They lived along the Hudson and painted bucolic scenes of the New York countryside. Out of our research came the exhibit *Travelers in Arcadia*. It was shown in both Detroit and Toledo in 1951, and it was a pioneering show, a real landmark project. The trustees were very kind in allowing me to do the

exhibition. It was of interest to American art historians. The pictures themselves were attractive but very few people even knew the names of the artists. So the show came and went, and the catalog was a landmark because it was the first published compilation of these artists' works. We borrowed art from all over the country, from private sources mostly, and some museums—wherever we could find them. The small catalog became the prototype for other scholarly books. The exhibition also became my introduction to the Hudson River School of American painting.

At the same time, Bartlett Cowdrey, my wife's cousin and an early scholar in this field, compiled a list of artists who had shown in annual exhibitions in the nineteenth century, which she later published. This list is still a basic tool for research in American nineteenth-century art. Many of the pictures in our exhibit were later found in her book. I also learned that there were dealers in this field. Bartlett had gone to work for a dealer because she couldn't find another job; she wanted to continue to write, and she had to have money to live on, so while compiling this book, she was employed by The Old Print Shop, on Thirtieth and Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. This small but important dealer specialized in American painting and prints, and I learned much from them. The market was small and the prices low. We had borrowed several of the paintings from that gallery for our exhibition. After the exhibition I resolved to buy

American nineteenth-century art for Toledo's museum. There was not much interest, but prices were so low that I could buy fine examples for the museum. American artists who were prominent in the nineteenth century had been more or less forgotten. I could buy large landscapes of the Hudson River School for $600 or less. It took years for interest in these paintings to grow.

Thomas Cole was probably the best known artist of the Hudson River School. He had a great reputation in the nineteenth century, which had not completely disappeared, because great examples of his work were in various public collections, such as the New York Historical Society in New York City. I began to search for an important Thomas Cole for Toledo. I didn't know where to go, but in talking to art dealers I learned that Thomas Cole's descendants still lived in his house along the Hudson River. I learned that there were still some of Cole's paintings in the house—they had never been sold. My wife and I visited the house one summer and met an elderly woman who was Cole's granddaughter.

She had a small antique business in the house, but she also had one very grand painting, *The Architect's Dream*, which Cole had never sold. I thought it a fascinating picture because of the subject matter: an architect seated on top of a classical column with a sketchbook in his hands, surrounded by every form of architecture from Egyptian to Greek to Roman to Gothic. It was a real study in eclectic architecture, popular in Cole's day. So I began to investigate it. Several

biographies of Thomas Cole had been written during his own lifetime because he was so famous. The fascinating history of *The Architect's Dream* appears in these early biographies. It seems that Thomas Cole was commissioned by one of the leading architects of the day, Ithiel Towne. Ithiel Towne had designed buildings in New Haven, and also in New York City. He was successful, prominent, and vain. He decided he wanted a picture by Thomas Cole, who was the leading artist of the day. So he commissioned Cole to paint him a picture that related to architecture. Cole set to work and painted *The Architect's Dream*, which he felt would please Towne. Unfortunately, Towne did not like the picture. But Cole said, "You just asked me to paint a picture about architecture, you didn't say what to paint. I've done what I thought was a splendid picture which would please you, and I expect to be paid." Towne replied that he would not pay, and the picture was returned to Cole, who was so angry that he never showed the picture again; it remained in his house, unsold, where I saw it over a century later.

When I told Cole's granddaughter that I'd like to buy the painting, she didn't know how to establish a price. So I obtained prices of other Thomas Coles and we finally agreed on a price which was reasonable. Because of the painting's size, it could only have gone to a museum. Then I discovered that Cole's granddaughter thought she owned the picture, but she didn't; it belonged to all the

living descendants of Cole. I learned there were six members of the Cole family living. The museum's attorney then advised that we would have to have a bill of sale signed by all of them. This we obtained, and *The Architect's Dream* is now Toledo Museum's prime nineteenth-century American painting. It is lent for all exhibitions of nineteenth-century American paintings in other museums. This landmark in our museum was bought only because I had the curiosity to go seek it out, the courage to buy it, and the trustees' agreement to acquire a picture almost unknown at the time.

We have discussed a little-known phase of American painting, but what we're doing is tracing the many different ways one can acquire works of art. As for other areas of the Toledo Museum's collection, for example, nineteenth-century French, we bought a great picture by Gustave Courbet, *The Trellis*, a well-known picture reproduced widely in art books. Again, I didn't know where it was, but somehow found that it had been owned at one time by Wildenstein. So again I went to Wildenstein and I said, "Do you by any chance still have that picture?" He replied, "Yes, I think so, but no one wants a Courbet right now. He's a realist painter and everybody wants impressionist pictures. If you want to see the picture I'll show it to you." I was thinking in terms of rounding out the collection: we had no Courbet, and Courbet was an important figure in the nineteenth century and this was an important large example. I asked about price

and Wildenstein said he hadn't quoted the price since the thirties. He looked it up on his card system and said, "If you want it you can have it at that early price. It's very low." We then were able to acquire it.

[Tape XII, Side One]

WITTMANN: Here is another example of the random nature of some acquisitions. On another occasion, when Wildenstein was showing me pictures, I saw hanging in the corridor as I was leaving a beautiful painting of flowers and fruit by Fantin-Latour. Fantin-Latour was a nineteenth-century French artist, known for his still lifes of flowers and fruit. I'd often admired one of his pictures in the National Gallery in Washington and decided years before that if I ever found another as good I would try to buy it. So here was just the thing and I said to Wildenstein, "That's the picture I want. You haven't offered it to me, but it's hanging on the walls of the corridor. Is it for sale?" And he said, "Yes, it's for sale if you want it; it's not the kind of thing I'd like to sell you. I'd like to sell you this picture over here, which costs several hundred thousand dollars, but if you want it you can have it, and you can have it at a reasonable price." Toledo was able to acquire it for . . . well, it must have been a twentieth of the normal price for a fine Fantin-Latour. Now, Wildenstein was a great salesman, and some of this had to have been because he wanted me to buy other things from him of course.

SMITH: And did you?

WITTMANN: I did, I bought good art from him when I could. I always thought that he was a very clever man to make such reasonable offers. Also, more than that, I really appreciated it, not so much for the Fantin-Latour, because anybody could have found that and known it was a good picture, but for the other two pictures I've mentioned, which were in his storage. I thought they were really great finds indeed, and he could have asked any price he wanted for them, because they're famous historically.

SMITH: Did you buy any pictures from him in the several hundred thousand dollar category?

WITTMANN: I don't believe so—not in those days. One thing I bought from him, which didn't cost anything like that, was the over life-size French seventeenth-century sculpture of Amphitrite, by Michel Anguier. Toledo's Claude Lorrain, formerly seized by Goering, came through Wildenstein at a straight market price; it was a beautiful and important picture. Wildenstein knew he could sell it to any museum.

I want to say, in connection with the acquisitions we've been discussing, that I didn't have to buy some of the great impressionist and postimpressionist pictures, because my predecessors had already bought them. I always felt very fortunate that they had had the good judgment to buy excellent examples in the

thirties, when prices for impressionist art were quite low. We own two wonderful van Gogh paintings, both of which were bought in the 1930s, so I didn't have to buy a van Gogh at a very high price; these were pictures for which the museum paid very little. We already had a wonderful Degas pastel, so I didn't have to buy that; we had a beautiful Monet painting; we had a very important Gauguin, bought in the thirties; a Blue Period Picasso, *Woman with a Crow*, a well-known picture; and a very large, lovely Bonnard. All those were already in Toledo's museum when I arrived, and this was one of the reasons I could acquire art of other periods to expand the collection.

I might say just a word about contemporary art because I haven't really touched on that. I have to say that this came somewhat later. I was so intent on buying older pictures before the prices began to go up and while it was still possible to find them because it was obvious that there were only a limited number of significant old pictures available. Most art that enters museums never comes out again, and therefore older art becomes ever more scarce. We have to deal not only with constant inflation but with rarity, and that's why for years my collecting centered on older art. But as time went on, there was a greater demand from our visitors for contemporary art. When Harold Boeschenstein became the president of the museum he said to me, "Otto, I really think we ought to buy more contemporary art. Yes, it costs money, and maybe you could get an

old master for the same price, but we can't just fall behind the world we're living in." He was that kind of man. Boeschenstein was head of Owens Corning Fiberglass, one of Toledo's three great glass companies. Started in 1940, the company made glass fibers to be used as insulation and strengthening in plastic. It became a very successful business.

About that time I was offered the directorship of two eastern museums: Boston and Philadelphia, and I was also invited by the Metropolitan Museum to be their chief curator. Of course I discussed these offers with Boeschenstein, who said, "Otto, we can't have that." I said, "Well, I don't want to go either, but they're offering considerably larger salaries and they are larger museums in larger cities." So Boeschenstein said, "That's easy enough, we'll increase your salary so that you won't leave." And he did, but that's a side issue.

SMITH: No, it's an important issue.

WITTMANN: I never thought that salary was the greatest thing in my life, but it was important as recognition for what I was doing. To return to contemporary art, Boeschenstein thought we ought to have at least one gallery of contemporary art, so with a newly employed curator, Robert Phillips, we began to buy some contemporary art. We bought the very best we could once we decided to do it. We bought the large Willem de Kooning, *The Lily Pond*. It's an abstract, colorful picture, and a beautiful example. We acquired a painting [*Night Spell*]

by Hans Hofmann, who was a great teacher of contemporary art as well as a great abstract painter himself. Mark Rothko was a great figure. Toward the end of his life his paintings became darker and darker in color, but we finally bought one that had quite a bit of color in it. I went to see him in his New York studio toward the end of his life. By that time he was very unhappy, very depressed. The pictures in his studio were very dark, almost ominous.

We also bought a painting by Richard Estes, a meticulously realistic artist. We acquired *Helene's Florist*, an early favorite of the artist. I went to see him in New York and his large apartment had paintings in almost every room in various stages of completion, but all very realistic views of New York City. I asked him, "Your paintings are almost photographic; are they copies of photographs?" He answered, "I may use a few photographs, but that's not the point of my paintings. You have to remember that a camera has only one eye, and we have two eyes, so we see things differently. A camera is steady, or you don't get a picture, whereas we're constantly turning our head and looking from side to side, and we're looking up and down. I paint realistically, yes, but I'm more realistic than a camera. A photograph is not realistic at all; it's only a one-eye vision. When I take photographs I may turn the camera and take four or five different angles of the same view, but I use these only for reference. I paint only what I see with my eye, and my eye moves around. The painting appears to be

photographically realistic, but it's actually more realistic than any photograph. Also, there's little perspective in my pictures. You know, most paintings have a point of perspective where the lines come together. There's no such thing in my pictures because my eye is constantly moving around." This was a revelation to me. You can always learn from talking to artists.

I should also say that some years before these acquisitions I had bought a mobile by 'Sandy' Calder and an early sculpture by Noguchi, so Toledo had contemporary art, and my two successors continue to buy contemporary art. Roger Mandle added many good examples, as has David Steadman, both with the guidance of Bob Phillips, who continues to advise the museum in this area.

I want to speak about the museum's glass collection. As you might expect, since Mr. Libbey, the founder of the museum, was also the founder of Toledo's glass business, glass would play a part in the museum, and indeed it did. Mr. and Mrs. Libbey traveled extensively in the Near East and Egypt. In Egypt they became fascinated with ancient glass. Later, Mr. Libbey began to buy large ancient glass collections that had been formed in the nineteenth century. What he bought he gave to the museum—he never owned ancient glass himself. Much of this considerable quantity of glass came to the museum in large crates. Some were opened, some were never opened. A few pieces of glass were displayed with the few other objects of classical art and Egyptian art already in

the museum. The vast remainder was stored in crates in the museum. The museum had bought practically no glass except for one magnificent, rare Venetian Renaissance goblet sold at auction in London just before World War II. My predecessor, Blake Godwin, bought this marvelous cup. It was called the Beroviero Goblet—Beroviero being the name of the glass blower who had made it around 1475 in Murano, the "glass island" off Venice.

When Harold Boeschenstein became president of the museum, he asked me, "Otto, what would you like to do most during the time that I'm president of the museum? I know that you've expanded the galleries, and you've built new galleries in the unfinished space, but what else would you like to do?" My reply was, "Beck, what I'd like to do most would be to unpack that glass that Mr. Libbey gave us and establish a new gallery to exhibit it. After all, we're a glass city, our money mostly comes from glass, and yet we don't really have any place to show it adequately in the museum." So he agreed and suggested I ask an architect to draw up some plans. I contacted Detroit designer-architects Ford and Earl and asked them to design galleries in the unfinished space off the classic court, where all the Greek and Roman objects were exhibited. The space there was two floors high; it went right up to the roof of the building, and there was never anything in it except concrete floor. I said I thought it ought to be a two-story gallery, because glass is small and you can't put it in one big gallery; it

wouldn't look like anything. We had to think in terms of small lighted cases so that the exhibition would enhance the color and beauty of the glass. Lighting was a problem because some glass is opaque, some translucent.

The designers came back with a drawing of a two-story space with an elevator in one side and a stairway in another. The center part would be a solid mass with two stories. I suggested a reversal of that plan, with a two-story open center, around which would be one-story galleries. In the central open space I suggested a ramp rather than a stairway, to reach the second story, so that groups of children could more easily follow the docents to the upper level. It would also allow wheel chairs so that an elevator would not be necessary.

The final plans were elegant, practical, and provided an excellent background for the glass, which could be arranged chronologically. Some years before, we had been given a large glass chandelier made by Orrefors, the Swedish glass company. This we hung from the ceiling of the two-story open space.

As the new glass gallery neared completion we began to unpack the glass and arrange it by date. Kurt Luckner, curator of classic art, was in charge. He researched the ancient glass, dated it accurately and installed it by period. Each piece had to be carefully cleaned first. The earliest glass known was not blown. The molten opaque material was wrapped around a sand core. Early glass was so

rare that it was used to make perfume bottles, only about four inches high.

On the ground floor we placed ancient glass, starting with Egypt, going up through the Near East, through the Muslim era, which was important because Muslim temples were lit with big glass lamps. These lamp-like bowls were beautiful in themselves. Glass by that time was translucent, with colored enamel designs. On the second level we placed European glass, and an extensive installation on the history of American glass, with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century examples.

As the glass gallery neared completion, the designers suggested for the entrance a map of the world on which could be indicated glass centers throughout history. It seemed to me that there should be a more dynamic way to express glass. I asked Nick [Dominick] Labino, a glass engineer and also a glass craftsman, if we could make an abstract mural of glass which would fit into this rectangular entrance. He said he had never done anything like that in his life, but by this time he had become so fascinated with glass blowing that he made his own glass furnace. He said he would like to try it, so he went to work and blew some shapes. He'd make a bottle, and while still molten, squash it so it became a flat piece, because we wanted to light this glass mural from the back. These squashed glass bubbles were beautiful, but round in shape, and we needed rectangular shapes to place in the rectangular entrance. Nick didn't know how to

make rectangular shapes, but he was inventive, and one day he said, "I think I've got it." He had built a new kiln to cool the glass. Nick had built a big, rectangular floor piece, into which was poured the molten glass. He poured different colors one on top of the other, and began to get the effect he wanted. He showed me the first small rectangular panel and said, "Now, I want you to know, nobody else could do this, because the great trick is when you put two colors of glass together they tend to crack, and if I didn't know as much as I did about the chemistry of glass, I wouldn't be able to do this." I said, "That's fine, Nick, a good start, but we've got to have many, many more, because what we're trying to do is to create a pattern to make a mural about ten feet high, which will be lit from the back. I know you can't make a ten-foot piece of glass, but we can put these panels together to form an abstract pattern." Every weekend my wife and I would go out to see Nick and his wife—they together were developing the designs and colors. Each week there were a few more pieces and they became very inventive in design and color. I'm sure Labino's wife was very helpful in that. She had been an art teacher and she knew color.

Finally Nick built a wooden frame approximately the same dimensions as the mural, with shelves every twelve inches or so. Each week we took the pieces of glass and simply set them on these shelves, with a light behind them, and in that way we could begin to make an overall design of the varied glass rectangles.

We had to design it as one would a painting. It was a kind of communal abstract design of colored glass rectangles.

[Tape XII, Side Two]

WITTMANN: Finally, when the overall design seemed satisfactory, Nick and his son-in-law built a permanent steel frame to hold the glass, and together they installed the mural in the entrance to the new glass gallery. The architects provided a light well in back to light the glass. It is a vivid, dramatic installation. It says, "This is glass," if anything ever could, and it was done by a contemporary craftsman right in Toledo, Ohio. After it was finished I asked, "Nick, what are you going to charge us for all this time you've given us and all this beautiful glass?" He said, "My friend Boeschenstein gave the gallery, the least I could do is to give the mural." Later on, this mural led Labino to design other murals throughout Ohio. He used similar glass panels for a mural at the museum in Columbus, Ohio, and later for a mural in the State House there. So, that's the story of glass. The glass came from Mr. Libbey, and the collection was developed and expanded by the museum. The gallery was built by Mr. and Mrs. Boeschenstein, who gave the money for it, and the glass mural was given by one of the great glass craftsmen of our time.

SMITH: I just have a couple of small questions connected to acquisitions. Sherman Lee mentions the bidding war on Rembrandt's *Aristotle* in 1963 as being

the turning point in the Cleveland Museum's collecting policy because that was the point at which the old master prices skyrocketed and they had to start considering other types of things to collect. Did that have an effect on how you were collecting in Toledo?

WITTMANN: I'm sure it did. Our president, several other trustees, and my wife and I all appeared at that sale in New York. I remember we all had dinner beforehand. Many other museum executives and private collectors were also in town—secret dinners taking place, people deciding how much they would agree to bid. Of course the *Aristotle* went to the Metropolitan Museum. The National Gallery lost out on it but bought that beautiful Fragonard of the girl in profile.

SMITH: You didn't go there for the Rembrandt though?

WITTMANN: No, we didn't. We knew we didn't have enough money. We went there because it was the sale of the century in many ways, and we knew there were going to be new and higher prices. Yes, it had an effect on future buying, as almost all prices for paintings went up. It was one of the reasons I turned more often to the decorative arts. Fewer museums and collectors were collecting decorative arts, and they never commanded the amount of money that paintings have; that's true of sculpture, it's true of furniture, and it's true of ceramics. In all those fields you can buy works of quality for much less. Also, I felt that our museum needed to develop those fields.

SMITH: Another question has to do with public tastes in America. I know that in Cleveland and in Los Angeles there were some hesitations about acquiring paintings with nudes in them because people in the community might get upset and feel that this was not appropriate for a museum that children visited. Did you have to deal with this problem at all?

WITTMANN: A little bit, but not much. It didn't bother me very much but I'll tell you a story about it. I already spoke about the *Morrison Triptych*, with Adam and Eve on the two outside wings. I noticed that certain school classes were led to see only the Virgin and Child, and ignored the rather modest nude Adam and Eve.

SMITH: Were there questions of public taste affecting the kinds of exhibits that you would do?

WITTMANN: Well, not as much as one would have thought; in fact, I can't think of any. I sometimes wondered how the public would react to religious pictures of an earlier period, or scenes of war where somebody's being killed, or the religious picture *The Feast of Herod*, with its grisly head of John the Baptist on a platter. But we never did have any complaints.

SMITH: What about your relationship with the local art community; did you have pressure on you to help promote local artists?

WITTMANN: The usual pressure, yes. We did have regular monthly one-

person exhibitions by local artists. The local artists had their own art clubs, and occasionally they felt we were not giving enough space or enough time and we weren't buying local art, which was true. I always felt that it is difficult to judge contemporary art, and local art, although I have judged a great many contemporary art exhibitions, usually in other museums. At one point in my life, toward the end of my career in Toledo, Harold Boeschenstein, our museum president, had built a handsome new building as headquarters for Owens-Corning Fiberglass Co., of which he was chairman. He wanted to furnish the offices with contemporary art and he asked me if I would buy the art. I replied, "No, I won't buy it for you, but I'll help you, because I think you ought to form a committee within your company. I will act as the committee's adviser."

We bought well over a thousand works of art for that building. They were by contemporary, young American painters for the most part—we bought only a few European examples. We were gambling on their continued success and recognition, and we bought heavily from the New York galleries for that reason. Some of them have become very famous, others I don't suppose we'll ever hear from again. But almost all the art is there in that collection. I thought in those days it was very hard to judge contemporary art as to whether it would be good or not ten, twenty, or thirty years from now. Maybe that wasn't very important, but I soon decided that if we were going to buy contemporary art, we

should buy what we thought was the best and let it go at that. Some of it would hang on the wall years from now, some of it would be gone; that's true of any collection of contemporary art—not all of it will last.

SESSION SEVEN: 26 April, 1993

[Tape XIII, Side One]

SMITH: I wanted to start off by continuing the discussion of staffing at the Toledo Museum of Art—some of the people that you brought in, their backgrounds, their strengths and weaknesses, and what particular contribution they made to the professionalization of museum work, which I see as a basic theme in discussing your period at Toledo. The first name is William Hutton, who became chief curator.

WITTMANN: That's right. I think I can do this somewhat chronologically. When I first came to Toledo, after the war, there was a very small staff, and practically no curatorial staff. Mr. Godwin's secretary did what curatorial work Godwin felt was needed, which wasn't very much. She had no professional training, so the records on the art were inadequate. As my first professional position was registrar of the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, long before World War II, I knew how important it was to keep accurate and complete records. It was not easy to organize a reasonable record file because the secretary was unwilling to reveal what records she had, and I found out later that some records had disappeared.

I also found that by some strange reasoning all the bills of sale for works of art that had been bought by the museum were retained in the downtown office

of the president of the trustees. All the assets of the museum, all the real estate we owned, and all the money that was invested was all handled through this downtown office in run by Justus Wilcox, who had been a kind of private secretary to Edward Drummond Libbey, and like so many similar people in that category, he was a rather limited person, jealous of his position and not willing to share information. I once asked Blake-More Godwin if sales records of art in the museum should be at the museum as part of a central file. Blake-More Godwin didn't agree with that at all. He thought they should be downtown and he also didn't want anybody to see them; he said it's all classified material. I said, "Yes, of course it's secret material. We don't intend to reveal the price we pay for art, but nevertheless the records ought to be in the museum." This went on, and I didn't get very far with that.

The only curator when I came to the museum in 1946 was an elderly gentleman, J. Arthur McLean, who had been at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts at one point in his history and was rather a specialist in Oriental art. The museum didn't really collect Oriental art, so he didn't have very much to do. He had an assistant though, who also worked in that department, and that was the only curatorial work that was done. The acquisition of works of art was the responsibility of the president of the museum, Mr. Godwin, the director, and his wife, and that's the way they liked it; but when I came, of course Mr. Godwin

permitted me to begin to recommend art acquisitions as he became occupied with the business side of the museum.

To return to Bill Hutton and curatorial development, I felt that it was very hard for a young person coming out of college to find a job, so I decided that I was going to bring in some young people directly out of college. I've talked about this before, but this leads up to William Hutton. I went to Harvard and explained to the art professors that Toledo Museum needed a young graduate who might become a good curator. One of the professors said, "We've got a young man who has just finished his master's degree and wants to stop for a while. Perhaps he'd be good for you." So I interviewed Bill Hutton, liked him, and he was employed as a curator. Together we began to work on some of the curatorial problems. He was an attractive person and very much liked. He came from upstate New York. He also was not able to break down the fact that museum records were not well organized. I was by that time doing most of the traveling, going to New York and Europe searching for works of art, which I generally discussed with Bill Hutton. Finally Bill began writing background descriptions of the pictures, based on our joint research, which we used in our proposals to the art committee of the board of trustees. Bill married the museum's librarian at the first museum wedding that I knew about.

After five or six years, Bill became restless and said that he really wanted

to be a museum director. I agreed he should try it if he really felt that way, but I felt he wouldn't be as good an administrator as he was a curator. He found a directorship at Manchester, New Hampshire, where there is a small but good museum. That lasted for about a year. It turned out he was not good at administration, which you have to be as a director, so his job there was not continued. He then didn't know what to do next. His family had money, so he decided that he would take his wife and children to London, and there, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, he would work on decorative arts, which had become his interest. He was able to find a position there, he and his family settled down in a house in London, and he enjoyed a successful career for about four or five years.

My wife and I were frequently in London and we kept in touch. One time Bill said, "Well, I think I've done about all I can do here, and I'm thinking now about coming back to the United States because the children are getting to the age when they should be educated there." I said, "Bill, you've now tried directorship, and you decided that it wasn't really for you. You've had a wonderful experience at the Victoria and Albert Museum, working with the best English art experts; would you ever want to consider coming back to Toledo?" He said he would think about it, and within about a year he did come back with his family and settled down in a very beautiful house in Toledo. He remained at

the museum up until December of 1992, when he retired as senior curator. He grew with the museum, and at one time became chief curator, but again, his lack of administrative ability didn't allow that to work out very satisfactorily. My successor as director had the brilliant idea of removing him from the position of chief curator and making him senior curator, thereby removing him from all administrative responsibility. By that time we had several good curators and we started a system of revolving chief curator, following the academic pattern—it worked much better. But Bill continued as senior curator and edited many publications. He was very seriously interested in scholarship and was enormously helpful. At last he found his real niche in research. He contributed a great deal to the Toledo Museum of Art.

Meanwhile, we did bring in several other curators. They came mostly from the Toledo-Michigan program, which I've spoken of before. The most significant recruit was Roger Berkowitz. As a young man he was a member of the joint intern program, and he returned to the University of Michigan where he received that special master's degree in museum work. We then brought him on as the curator of decorative arts. He later became chief curator and is now the assistant director for curatorial responsibilities. Roger is the acting director of the museum when the present director is out of town. So that's one case where a man grew into a position at the museum from his early internship in the Toledo-

Michigan program. His wife is an attorney who teaches art and law at the University of Toledo.

Another person who came to us from the University of Michigan intern program was our registrar, Patricia Whitesides. After receiving her undergraduate and masters degrees at Michigan, she became registrar at Michigan's university art museum. After several years we invited her to become the Toledo Museum's registrar, which she still is today, after more than twenty years.

I wanted to concentrate all Toledo's art records in the registrar's office. That idea came from my work at the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, where I had established such files in the thirties. There was a folder for every work of art; in it would be a photograph of the work of art, a form with all information available, correspondence and verbal comments by specialized scholars, whether favorable or unfavorable, along with any financial records. We were never able to find the bills of sale for the works of art Mr. Libbey himself had bought during his lifetime, which he'd given to the museum. As registrar, Ms. Whitesides examines every work of art when it comes into the building and prepares a condition report. If a work goes out on loan to another museum, the registrar again makes a careful record of condition when it left, and she usually oversees the packing.

SMITH: What about efforts to standardize methods of record keeping between museums?

WITTMANN: Yes, that's all done now. At the annual meetings of the American Association of Museums there is now always a registrars' section, with seminars where they can get together and talk about their concerns.

SMITH: One question on contemporary art. It has tended to be a controversial aspect in museums because people don't understand minimalism, for instance, or explicit sexual content, or political overtones. Did you have problems of that nature, where the public or the trustees didn't like something, either for aesthetic or social reasons?

WITTMANN: No, it never became a serious problem. I think that most people felt that the Toledo Museum should have contemporary works. Certainly the artists in town did. A modern art society was established in Toledo after Robert Phillips became the museum's curator in this field. This group raises its own funds and buys works of art for the museum in the contemporary field, with Bob Phillips's leadership. There were of course a few articulate foes of modern art.

Mrs. Canaday was the wife of a longtime trustee, Ward Canaday, who was the head of the Willys Overland Company in Toledo. All the jeeps in World War II were made there, and Mr. Canaday was a very important man in the community. His wife detested modern art. One day she was visiting the

museum, and this was when contemporary art occupied the gallery nearest the entrance. I believe I mentioned that I had arranged the museum so that visitors moved from modern art to older art. I put it there because I wanted people to see it first. One of our instructors was discussing modern art with a group of children, and Mrs. Canaday came storming into my office, which was right there near the front entrance, and said, "Otto, fire that man!" And I said, "Who's that?" She said, "That man out there is talking about modern art and telling those little children that modern art's good, and they ought to like it." So I walked out to see who it was, and it turned out it was the man in charge of our entire art education department at that time, an intelligent, excellent teacher, who later was the chief educator at the Hirshhorn Gallery in Washington, D.C. He was just giving the normal lecture explaining modern art. I came back and said, "Well look, Mrs. Canaday, I can't do that. He's a very important member of our staff. He's just giving a lecture, that's all. Kids don't have to believe it if they don't want to, you know." Well, she said, "If you won't fire him I'm going to withdraw my membership support and you'll never get another penny from the Canadays." That bothered me a little until I asked our membership office how much the Canadays were giving. And it turned out that even though Mr. Canaday had been a trustee for a few decades, he and his wife had never become members of the museum, if you can believe it. [laughter] I couldn't believe it.

However, the whole thing blew over and my wife and I continued to be good friends of the Canadays. She never liked modern art, but she got over her feeling about our chief instructor, and about me, so that was all right. So we never had any serious problem.

SMITH: Did you get involved in the programming of contemporary art shows?

WITTMANN: Oh yes, as director I was involved in all exhibitions so that our exhibitions could be balanced.

SMITH: You say you don't personally have a great interest in contemporary art. In view of that, how does the question of your personal taste interface with the kinds of shows that are developed or the pictures that are acquired?

WITTMANN: No, that is why Bob Phillips became our curator in this field. He knew more than I about contemporary art. It was a question of knowing, as much as anything else, and I felt that my knowledge was stronger among older pictures and older works of art, which also interested me more. So Bob helped greatly with the organization and acquisition and exhibition of modern and contemporary art.

SMITH: But you would have to agree to an acquisition?

WITTMANN: Yes, but I was perfectly willing to. I wasn't against it, I just didn't know enough and I didn't feel comfortable with it.

SMITH: So you wouldn't say something like, "No, I don't like Franz Kline, I'd

rather have Robert Motherwell."

WITTMANN: No, not at all. I felt that was not what I should do and that Bob had the appropriate knowledge. If he recommended an important contemporary work of art and it was priced that we could afford, then we usually bought it. I think the last two directors have both also relied on Bob Phillips to bring not only interesting exhibits of contemporary art but also examples for purchase.

SMITH: With contemporary art, what about showing things that you personally don't like, but that have acquired some kind of national or international reputation so that one feels an obligation to expose citizens to these things?

WITTMANN: Well, I never minded that, I thought art should be shown. If our visitors were interested in contemporary art they should be able to see it. If Bob wanted to put it in an exhibition, it should be there. It isn't as though I hadn't had experience, it was just that I was less interested. You'll recall, in talking about the Harvard days, I mentioned that I had been active in the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art. There was where we really got in trouble. I was almost expelled from college once because of what we exhibited, partly because of a political situation. But we were the first in Boston to show surrealism and modern art there. During my early days at Toledo Museum, we had annual exhibitions of contemporary American art, usually about eighty pictures. I enjoyed doing this myself—this is before we had a curator—and I selected the

paintings for these annual exhibitions. I always tried to buy two or three pictures from the exhibitions each year, and to encourage Toledoans to buy also. Some good contemporary American art entered the museum's collection in this way.

SMITH: How did you respond to the development of pop art?

WITTMANN: It was an interesting period in art history. I know what the movement was about, but I was not very interested myself. I did acquire for the museum some modern realistic art, such as the Estes, which I already discussed.

SMITH: Oh, the photorealism, like [Philip] Pearlstein?

WITTMANN: Yes, as I have said before, photorealism is much more than just colored photographs—it's serious art.

SMITH: This is purely subjective, but I think it would be interesting for the record if you could just state your strongest likes and dislikes in contemporary art, knowing that it's just purely personal.

WITTMANN: From a purely personal standpoint, I've always liked the abstract aspects of art, because I can relate to that. There's always an abstraction in any work of art. The work of art is a composed series of forms and shapes and colors which are put together. In the past, sometimes they ended up being a Virgin and Child, sometimes a crucifixion, because they were also telling a story, but if you simplify that and say there's no story here, but there's simply an abstract series of shapes and colors, I can also respond to that. I'm less keen on

pictures that have a social message. I'm less interested particularly when art becomes a political voice. I think there are other ways to express politics, or to recognize politics. I feel that sometimes art with messages is too strident. I liked the realist movement. I realized it was more than just a photograph; it was a serious art expression.

Now, about minimalism. As I have already discussed I felt strongly about the work of Mark Rothko, who I think I can call a minimalist, in a way. He was a man of very deep feelings. I acquired a large canvas for Toledo simply because I found it very beautiful to look at. His sense of color and the depth of his feelings were all there, and yet it was nothing more than large abstract colors with soft edges, blending one into the other.

SMITH: What about somebody like Jeff Koons? How do you feel about appropriation art, I think it's called?

WITTMANN: It just doesn't interest me very much. I don't think he's an important artist. I don't know what to say about what will come next, we'll just have to see what happens.

SMITH: A lot of very contemporary art is focused on issues of sexuality or gender. Did that become something that could enter into the Toledo Museum?

WITTMANN: Not very well. Sexuality is an important aspect of human life, there's no doubt about that, but I don't know just exactly how it plays in art. I

guess I'm saying that probably I'm more interested in abstract things than I am in specifics. Certainly sexuality plays a greater part in our life today than it has in the immediate past, where a lot of this was hidden under the covers, but it was still there, and now it's out in the open. There has been plenty of sexuality throughout art history. However, I feel it's difficult to judge whether or not today's art is a passing phase. Fifty or a hundred years from now we may wonder why we liked some art: what did it mean? was it serious or not? But Toledo's museum is a general museum, and no one phase of art has dominated its collections.

SMITH: What about somebody like Barbara Kruger and that kind of aesthetic but nevertheless political manipulation of images?

WITTMANN: As I've said, I don't feel political images are really very good in art. It makes more sense to me in literature. I don't think visual art is a satisfactory place for it. I'm not a very good philosopher and do not express myself very adequately in answer to questions such as these, but I do believe that the purpose of art museums—at least general ones like Toledo, which attempt to show art from Egypt to the present—is simply to help us understand that humanity changes, but not very much. Looking thoughtfully at art of the past may help us to understand the present. There are slow waves of change that wash back and forth over the centuries, but there's really nothing completely new.

[Tape XIII, Side Two]

SMITH: There are a couple of other people I wanted to ask you about—Kurt Luckner and William Chiego.

WITTMANN: Kurt Luckner came to us as a young man just out of college. He showed up in the office one day in Toledo and said, "I'm Kurt Luckner. I'm driving across the country, and I'm looking at all the museums I can see that have classical collections, and then I'm going to decide where I want to work." And I thought, "Oh, that's nice." He said he came to us because he knew we had some fine classical objects. He said he was going to see other museums with good classical collections, and when I got through, he would write us a letter and tell us where he decided to work.

SMITH: Did this remind you of yourself somewhat?

WITTMANN: Not really, I was never so arrogant. [laughter] I was more diplomatic. That autumn, he wrote, "I've looked at all those museums and I've decided that I'm going to come to Toledo." By that time I had decided we did need a curator, and I thought anybody who was that eager would probably be a good one.

SMITH: So he was in his mid-twenties?

WITTMANN: Oh, he was just out of college I think, probably early twenties, twenty-three, twenty-four, something like that. He'd been educated at Stanford

University, where there was a good classical department.

SMITH: Was this in the fifties or the sixties?

WITTMANN: Oh this would be the sixties I guess—mid-sixties. Kurt Luckner has grown to be a very significant curator. He's well known, he has done a great many very good catalogs of classical art, and he has organized excellent exhibits, often in collaboration with other museums.

The other person you asked about is Bill Chiego. He came to us soon after college as an assistant curator of European art. He had recently married one of the daughters of Sherman Lee, the director of the Cleveland Museum of Art. Bill was a pretty good scholar, but he didn't have a very good eye for works of art. At that time we were beginning to assemble a catalog of European paintings, which I wanted to publish before I retired. Bill was put in charge of the project because I thought he had the ability to synthesize the necessary research. Several other young scholars were engaged to join the project. For a short time Bill remained in charge of it all, but he began to irritate people. He was not very tactful, and I finally had to place the leadership with Bill Hutton, who was much older and more diplomatic. He got along well with his younger colleagues. Bill Chiego stayed with us, I think, only about a year or two years, at which time he said he wanted to go on to another position. After several years he became the director of the museum at Raleigh, North Carolina. He remained

there for a few years and I believe he is now in a museum on the West Coast. He grew to be more tolerant, and successful.

SMITH: It sounds like people came onto your staff at a very young age, by and large.

WITTMANN: On the whole they did, because I was so keen about giving people a chance to begin a career. I think Bob Phillips was one of the few who had had broad experience before he came in. Kurt talked himself into the job, and I've forgotten where I found Bill Chiego. Perhaps Sherman Lee recommended him. It is interesting that almost all of them continued with the museum to this day. Bill Hutton just retired, having reached sixty-five. His whole career was there except for those years in England. Berkowitz is still the associate director of the museum and probably will spend his life there. Kurt Luckner I'm sure will complete his career at Toledo. They all like Toledo and they're a very close group. You know, in many organizations there's a lot of backbiting, infighting, and internecine strife; it is frequent in large institutions and several museums, but this group in Toledo are friends and they enjoy working together. It is a great tribute to Toledo's curators and to the two directors who came after me that there has been very little change in the staff that I first employed.

SMITH: I will be asking you about Roger Mandle, but I think perhaps we'll hold off till we get to your retirement. I'd like to go back to the question of the

board of trustees and the presidents. We talked about Boeschenstein, who was so instrumental with the glass gallery. I'd like to ask a more general question about the degree to which presidents who came on the board had a sense of an agenda or an ambition to accomplish something during their terms. Could you kind of characterize the succession of presidents and perhaps compare it to Cleveland or the Los Angeles County Museum, or other museums.

WITTMANN: Well, I'd say first of all that there's one basic difference between the trustees of Toledo and the trustees of almost any other museum that I know, and that is that with one or two exceptions, they were not collectors of art; rather, they were the leaders of our community. Being on the board of the Toledo museum was considered a great honor, and I can only think of one man who ever turned it down. Almost everybody was delighted to be a trustee. They were the leaders; they were successful businessmen, and many of them were also on the board of the Toledo Hospital, which was our greatest hospital. Some of them were on bank boards. They gave their services to the community chest each year, and in a small town like Toledo, which is roughly 400,000 people, you knew very quickly which ones were going to lead and which ones were not. It also meant that they were older, because we never knew who was going to be the next leader. They chose them for the leadership. It was a self-perpetuating board; they elected their successors.

When I first came to Toledo, we had a nonrotating board of trustees. After a few years a rotating board was established. The board has never been very large; I think the maximum was twenty-six, and we seldom have over twenty. There were two categories: regular trustees for five years and charter trustees for nine years, which was generally used for officers of the board. There was also an honorary trusteeship for those who completed their terms. Honorary trustees were invited to all meetings but had no vote. After a year honorary trustees could be elected back on the board, but this was only done occasionally.

The great problem in most museums, and certainly in big museums, is that they tend to get collectors on the board who have works of art that the museums hope will be donated to them, which means that the board may defer to such trustees, with the hope that they will eventually give their works of art to the museum. We didn't have that problem. Also, the direction of the Toledo museum was set to a greater extent by the director. The trustees could say, "First, will the director's program benefit the community?" That's what they were interested in: what would benefit the community. But they didn't say to the director, "You ought to have an exhibit of seventeenth-century French art," or, "You ought to collect a certain kind of art." They left that to the director—the professional. When I first became director, the president said,

"Otto, we want you to do just as your predecessors have done, and that is to run a good show. You have to run the museum like a business, understand the budget, establish the direction of collecting art, and run the exhibition and the education programs. As long as you do that, you'll be the director." That was it, just like that. It was just like running a corporation to them; there was no nonsense like, "Maybe he'll get better, maybe we can teach him," or, "We'll run it ourselves"—which happened in some museums. They were a wonderful group of men and women. We did begin to get women on the board, but not very many.

SMITH: Were they business people as well?

WITTMANN: The women tended to be leaders in other ways; they were leaders in the community chest and charitable projects. Leaders of the women's volunteer programs at the museum serve on the board as ex officio members.

The presidents of the museum generally were also presidents of the big glass corporations, because that was the chief industry in my day. There were the three great glass companies which I spoke of earlier: Libbey Owens Ford, which still carried the Libbey name; Owens Illinois, which had been founded in the depression to take over the glass bottle business; and Owens Corning Fiberglass, a new business which had started at the beginning of World War II—a combination of Owens Illinois and Corning Glass Company. Because Mr.

Libbey, who brought the glass industry to Toledo, had also started the museum, these men always felt a strong loyalty to him and to the museum. So those three companies had their headquarters in Toledo, those men led the community, and they always lived in the community. They didn't take their headquarters to New York. Although the corporations had factories in various parts of the country, the headquarters remained in Toledo, and these leaders were always available. They were also very generous to the museum, both through their corporations as well as personally.

The first man I can remember, as a trustee and then as president, was John D. Biggers. He was head of Libbey Owens Ford, which produced flat glass. He was a superb salesman and while he was president of Libbey Owens Ford, all glass used in General Motors automobiles was provided by this Toledo company. He was the most influential and powerful man in the community in his day. It was Jack Biggers who suggested a rotating board for the museum soon after he had established a rotation system for the Toledo Trust Company, our largest bank, of which he had also been president. It was also Jack Biggers who invited me to join the board of the bank, making me the first museum director on the board of a major bank in Toledo.

William E. Levis, head of Owens Illinois Glass Company, was also on the museum's board for many years. He also served as president of the museum.

He, like Biggers, was chiefly interested in education and how the museum could benefit the community. Levis felt the museum would need large endowments in the future, and sought ways to raise additional funds. We already had the endowments of the Libbeys certainly, and most Toledoans assumed that was enough. Mr. Libbey had died in 1926, Mrs. Libbey in 1937, and both their fortunes came to the museum. Everybody thought that was all the money the museum could possibly need, forgetting inflation, forgetting World War II, and forgetting the museum's continuing growth and need for additional funds. Bill Levis's main strategy was to start a new endowment fund which would bring in new money. We started off by talking to the lawyers and the bankers in town, because they were the ones who handled trusts and estates and knew the contents of wills. This seemed a logical place to start, but it wasn't. The lawyers and bankers tactfully explained that they followed their clients' wishes, but didn't tell them what to do with their money. They told us we had to start with the people who had money. So we learned our lesson. The museum's trustees themselves began to think about giving to a new endowment fund. Soon they agreed to ask others in the community for money.

In some museums directors are expected to be money-raisers. In fact, today in many museums fund-raising has become a major responsibility of directors. This was not so at Toledo. Our trustees said, "Otto, we don't want

you to raise money. You run a good professional museum which serves the community, and we can raise the money. We can ask our friends for money for the museum and they will give it, knowing that in turn they can ask for funds for their charities, hospitals, and other community needs. It's trading, and it's trading at a level that you as a museum director, a salaried employee, shouldn't even be trying to do because that's not your job."

So that's how they got started raising money for the endowment fund, and Bill Levis led the drive and was very generous himself. Bill, as you may remember, was the man who when I first met him said, "I want some pictures for my house, and I don't know enough about it. You tell me what to buy and I'll buy them. I don't want to negotiate in a field I don't know." That's the kind of man he was; he compartmented jobs. He knew what my job was, he knew what his job was, and he didn't want to get them mixed up. He didn't want to choose a work of art, he wanted somebody else to do that. He knew how to manage a large corporation, how to make and raise money. The endowment fund today is much larger than the Libbey funds ever were, and it's the chief source of income for the operation of the museum. To this day, we've always operated in the black—we've never had a deficit budget at the museum. So that's Bill Levis.

Not all the museum's presidents were such dynamic leaders as Biggers and Levis. Harry E. Collin, a leading stockbroker in town, had his own company.

He was quite successful; he was as well liked as any stockbroker has to be to be successful. He became president of the museum. The trustees felt that he would be a great source for money because he knew where the money was, and he was investing it for other people all the time. Why couldn't he say to those people, "Well look, because of me you made $10,000 yesterday, and you'll probably make $100,000 tomorrow. Why don't you give a little bit of that to the Toledo Museum?" So he seemed like a likely person to be president. However, he was a rather quiet, retiring man, reluctant to ask anybody for money; he just didn't feel that he could do it very well, and he wasn't a very good leader. He was a successful stockbroker but not a good leader. He didn't suggest any new programs to be initiated during his time—he just let things coast along. During the time he was president things sort of stagnated and were quiet. Nothing much happened, and I went ahead as best I could with making acquisitions. There was that money in the Libbey funds which could only be used for works of art. I was also able to present some good art exhibitions. Following his presidency, the other trustees became restive. They saw that the museum wasn't working very well, and they said to Harold Boeschenstein, "You'd better become the next president."

[Tape XIV, Side One]

WITTMANN: Boeschenstein was head of that newest of the great Toledo glass

companies, Owens Corning Fiberglass. He'd been very successful with his business. He was a great protégé of Bill Levis, who had brought him to Toledo. So Beck, as we all called him, agreed to be president. Soon after he took the position he said, "Otto, I'm going to be president for the next four years. What do you want to do most while I'm president?" I have already told the story of my answer—a new gallery for glass. That's the kind of man he was: dynamic, straightforward, and very active in the community. He wanted to see the community involved in the museum to a much greater extent than it ever had been before. He wanted to hold parties in the museum as a way to raise money. Beck insisted on having our first party for a group of donors who had agreed to give $500 or more each year—in those days $500 a year seemed like a lot of money. It was a rather small, sedate dinner party in the museum. Not very exciting, but a pleasant way to emphasize the museum. Beck wasn't satisfied. "Next year, we're going to have cocktails and wine." The following year he added music—a classical quartet. And after that he said, "The heck with that quartet. They were just playing old classical music. I want dance music." So the following year he got a splendid jazz group that played great dance music. They were loud and boisterous and fun, and we moved the party over to the largest gallery of the museum and provided a dance floor. It became a very happy party, and the minimum annual fee to join the ever-growing group was

now $5,000. That's what Beck did—he was a salesman!

SMITH: That was in the sixties?

WITTMANN: Late sixties, early seventies.

SMITH: I've noticed that the concepts of the museum as a fun place to be and museum openings as parties are ideas that took hold in the sixties.

WITTMANN: It was new for Toledo's museum. We had had museum dinner parties formerly at the Toledo club, because before Beck, liquor was never allowed in the museum. He was able to change that.

SMITH: But museums seemed to lose some of their somber quality at that period and I guess the question is, why is that? Is it because of the new generation coming up, who took things a little less seriously?

WITTMANN: Perhaps. We were getting younger trustees by that time, but Beck himself was such a dynamic man; he was the salesman par excellence. However, Toledo could hardly be called somber or staid. We could hardly be called that with all the children who came. Kids from all over the city came. Black, white, yellow—they all came to the museum. Classes and admission were all free, and all they had to do was walk in the door. Anyway, Beck was into this fund-raising business, and he said the only way the museum would increase funds was by doing something that would make it a pleasure for people to come here. We had categories of donations and membership so that people could

advance through categories through accumulated giving. Beck was the first to set a top category of $1 million. The lowest category was $5,000. Names of donors were recorded on a large bronze plaque.

SMITH: Were these ideas that people were bringing in from, say, hospital fund-raising? Were they well-established ideas in other parts of the community?

WITTMANN: I think that other areas of the community were doing it almost simultaneously, yes. It was, as you say, a movement toward getting more money and it took place not only in Toledo but elsewhere. Cleveland had always raised money, because instead of having one wealthy family, like Toledo's Libbey family, there were a great number of families in Cleveland who were generous to the museum. Cleveland also had a junior trustee council, and out of that they drew their active trustees later on; that was their way of approaching the younger group. We developed trustees through the museum's volunteer groups which were very important to us. So Beck stimulated the museum and the community. Our annual dinner parties for donors attracted great interest. Cocktails were followed by a good dinner, which was followed by brief talks by the president and director, and then dancing. Beck talked about how the museum benefitted the community, and I often unveiled a new acquisition, emphasizing the importance of the growing art collections. These dinner parties interested many younger families, and we began to see people giving $5,000 easily, and then they

began to give more. And elderly people, some of whom we hardly knew, began to will large amounts of money to the museum.

Fund-raising for the museum spread beyond the community of Toledo. Membership volunteer solicitors approached nearby small towns which had no museum. Findlay, Ohio, is a good example. Findlay was a wealthy oil town. Marathon Oil had its headquarters there and the family that had started Marathon Oil still lived there and controlled the company, which operated all over the world, as all oil companies do. Our membership volunteers started a Toledo Museum chapter there. The museum provided exhibitions in Findlay, invited Findlay families for special programs in Toledo, and we also provided art talks in Findlay. This was so successful that Toledo Museum membership solicitation expanded to other surrounding towns. If the town was too small for a chapter, the museum organized special bus trips to the museum, where we provided luncheon and a tour and talk about the museum. Some families drove their children twenty miles to the free Saturday art classes. This network was very helpful. Gradually, people began to think of the museum as something they should give to instead of something that the Libbeys cared for in perpetuity. This has gone on to this day and is the principal reason the museum still has no deficit. Foresight by the trustees and strong support can conquer most problems.

Beck was followed by other trustees, and I should like to talk about one

more—Marvin Kobacker. Marvin Kobacker's family had lived in Toledo and they owned one of the important retail stores there. Kobacker was a very shrewd, successful businessman and a man who loved the museum and had been a trustee for some years. He was a great leader of the Jewish community. He led the synagogue, he gave generously to all good causes, supported the Toledo symphony and the university. He was well liked, a great leader in the community—a wonderful man. Marvin became the last president under whom I served. I was very fond of him. He was more or less my age, and had for years been active and generous to the museum. He was a very good president. He understood art better than most. He understood the activities of the museum and supported them. He was so well liked in the community that many gave money because of him. He established new relationships with other cultural institutions in the community, such as the symphony orchestra.

In later years Marvin moved to Florida, but he returned every summer to Toledo. After he sold the family's retail business, he developed an enormously successful national chain of shoe stores called Pickway. He was a naturally successful businessman and always helpful to the museum in every way. I saw to it that he stayed on as president after Roger Mandle succeeded me as director in 1977. Marvin wanted to resign when I retired, and I said, "No, you have to stay and be the connecting link. I'm going to leave the day I'm sixty-five, and

Roger's going to take over, and I want you to stay on as president until he is firmly established." He did that, and of course there have been other presidents since then. So now I've told you all I can about those I knew. They've varied greatly from heads of Toledo's leading corporations, to Beck, who was the great salesman, to this Marvin, who was a great retailer—leaders with different qualities. None of them interfered with the professional aspects of the museum.

SMITH: Let's switch out of Toledo and look at some of your national and international connections. The first thing I want to ask you about is your involvement with the USIA [United States Information Agency] from 1953 to 1955.

WITTMANN: The USIA at that time was an agency that supplied information about the United States to various parts of the world, and they provided libraries in embassies where publications about America were available. One program dealt with exhibitions which could be easily transported from one library to another throughout embassies. USIA decided that art education in the United States would be a good subject. They chose Toledo because of its well known programs. I was asked to organize the exhibition, which was to be a series of folding panels to illustrate through photographs and words, art education in museums and schools in the United States. Copies of the exhibit were made and it traveled for several years. That was all that I did for USIA.

SMITH: The next organization which I think is fairly important is the Association of Art Museum Directors. You were president twice, and I wanted to focus on what your goals were during your presidencies.

WITTMANN: This was a small organization of less than a hundred art museum directors when I was president. It was started in 1916 as an opportunity for art museum directors to meet each year at a different museum to discuss their common problems and to exchange information. It was still a small organization when I was first invited to become a member—the only member who was an associate director, not a full director. I must admit it was run more or less like a club in those days, and some directors were not admitted. It was not a very democratic organization, I'm afraid, at that time but it did include almost all the major museums of the country. The category "major" was based on the annual budget of the museum, so that a lot of smaller museums were not admitted. I was president in 1961-62, and 1971-72. Most directors were only president once.

Now it is a much larger organization, much broader in scope and much more formal in its programs; it now meets twice each year. But in the time I am speaking of, it was a small group of good friends who enjoyed each other's company. Wives were always invited and welcome. We had a good time together and we always met in a different city each year so that we could see the

museums of that particular city, and that's the way that went. We didn't have many serious goals. It was really sort of a clublike atmosphere in which we got together, talked over our problems and often talked over common efforts for exhibitions. Even at that time exhibitions were costly enough so that few of us could do an exhibition by ourselves. We usually tried to develop an idea which we thought was a good one, and then we'd ask other museums to join us. Two or three museums would get together on the expenses, and then we could manage it and put out a good catalog. So it was kind of an exchange of information: what museums didn't have directors, who would be a good person to get, did anybody there know about a good curator who might become a director—it was that kind of an organization.

They rotated their president every year, which gives you also an idea of how serious it was—not too. So quite a few members had a turn at being president for the year. Some never wanted to be, but most people who cared about the organization sooner or later did serve as president. I got into it the second time simply because that year they didn't have anybody that wanted to take it. It's a certain responsibility, because you have to organize the whole thing and you have to decide which city you're going to meet in and who's going to be the host. The president was responsible for planning the meetings and chairing them. There were always dinner parties hosted by the resident museum, and

visits to private collections. At the meetings we discussed legal and government problems, joint exhibition possibilities, and salary and personnel problems.

Today it's quite a different organization. As time went on, other museums wanted to be admitted, so the limit of the budget was lowered to include smaller museums. Our organization had been the Association of Art Museum Directors. Over the years we decided that it should be an association of museums, so the qualification was based on the museum, not the director. It now has over 150 members. Of course now, fund-raising, government legislation, and taxation are important subjects, and specialists in these areas are invited to speak. This year I notice, in June, they're going to talk about governance of museums. What they mean by governance is not what the director does for the professional staff but what the trustees do to govern the museum, as they might govern a hospital or any other non-profit institution—how museums can relate to their communities. The association prepares salary studies not only of directors but of museum staff positions. I'm now an honorary member of the organization, but I seldom attend meetings.

SMITH: What was your personal role in effecting these changes?

WITTMANN: I felt community relationship was basically important for all museums. I believed in government support for museums and I was active in testifying before congressional committees at the time the National Endowments

for the Arts and for the Humanities was first being discussed in President Kennedy's period. I believed museums would have to develop broader community support before they could expect much federal support or even much foundation support. I worked with the then new Ford Foundation to develop new means to support museums, such as grants for museum catalogs and publications, and I was active in developing the federal indemnity program to provide a method of insurance for valuable works of art lent to important temporary exhibitions. I suppose that basically I felt museums had to prove their worth to their communities before they could expect the needed support from outside sources.

SESSION EIGHT: 27 April, 1993

[Tape XV, Side One]

SMITH: When we left off yesterday, you had been discussing the Association of Art Museum Directors, and you wanted to start today with the American Association of Museums.

WITTMANN: The American Association of Museums is a large organization of approximately five thousand members from various kinds of museums: art, science, history, zoos, aquariums and so forth. Membership includes not only art museum directors but also registrars, superintendents, conservators and other museum employees. It meets each year at various locations in the United States. It is a significant nationwide organization of museum personnel. Its meetings are not only general, but also include seminars and workshops for specific disciplines. I have been a member for many years. I was a member of the council, their governing group, and eventually became a vice president. I was offered the presidency but didn't feel I could devote sufficient time while still director of the Toledo Museum.

However, through this organization I was active in encouraging a national program for the arts and humanities, and I testified often before congressional committees concerned with legislation on such programs.

SMITH: So if you spoke on behalf of the Museum Association, did that mean

you were not simply speaking as an art museum person but in terms of all museums?

WITTMANN: For all museums, yes, because many museums would benefit from this and have indeed benefitted from it, but of course I was always identified as an art museum director. Congress finally established a National Council on the Arts and a National Council on the Humanities to advise the government foundations. President Kennedy proposed the original list of members of the National Council on the Arts and included my name. Following President Kennedy's assassination, President Johnson then appointed in 1964 the Kennedy list of members to the National Council on the Arts. I think there were about thirteen or fourteen members.

SMITH: Can I ask you, did you have personal conversations with either President Kennedy or President Johnson about the arts and their needs?

WITTMANN: No. My testimony on these needs was before congressional committees. Once the project got started, Johnson assigned a lot of the responsibility for overseeing the councils to the vice president, who was [Hubert] Humphrey at that time.

SMITH: Do you think Johnson had a personal interest in this?

WITTMANN: He had a certain political interest in it. I don't think he had a great personal interest. Direct responsibility for interest in the arts was delegated

to Vice President Humphrey. Ladybird Johnson was always quite interested in this and at several meetings at the White House which I attended she continued to express interest in the arts and in programs which we developed. The National Council on the Arts was the advisory group to the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] and met periodically, usually in Washington. It was made up not only of three art museum directors but also leaders from the opera, cinema, music, from dance, literature, and other arts. We first had to establish guidelines, and then decide how to allocate the limited funds first allocated by Congress. To me, it seemed the most important principle established was that requests for funds should be judged by peers, not by politicians. This worked well in the beginning and gave credibility to the Council. The NEA and the NEH [National Endowment for the Humanities] became the first organizations in our nation's history to give money to the arts and humanities. It has had a somewhat rocky history. The amount of money has increased, but the way in which it has been used has varied greatly over time and it's not quite the same organization that it used to be. It became politicized over the years.

SMITH: Going back to 1964, I wonder if you could recapture what you in particular wanted to see happen with this and what you were afraid could happen if the right direction was set.

WITTMANN: As I have said, initial funds were very limited, and each

discipline in the arts wanted a part. Of course I thought museums should have a part because they served the public with organized programs in the arts. Funds for individual artists seemed more difficult to decide, but necessary. How best to support artists? At one time, some funds were allocated for housing artists. The NEH acquired a hotel in downtown New York and remodeled it for artist's studios. Museums received some funds and symphony orchestras received funds for the performing arts.

SMITH: So there was a debate about the amount of money that should go to established art institutions and how much should go to new work and individual artists.

WITTMANN: Yes.

SMITH: I guess one of the factors that influenced Kennedy was the 1962 crisis at the Metropolitan Opera, where the Met nearly canceled its season because of a labor dispute and inadequate funds to pay its labor costs. I know that that remained a symbolic issue: whether the National Endowment of the Arts should spend its money to subsidize what might in fact be inefficient organizations such as the Metropolitan Opera, with such excessively high labor costs. Did that come up in discussions?

WITTMANN: It came up; it wasn't a very important issue at the time because there really wasn't enough money to help very much with that. I should say that

on the National Council on the Arts there was the head of the musician's union. n Of course he upheld the musician's interests, but it didn't become a great issue because there just wasn't enough money there to support it anyway, and everybody had their own ideas about what should be done.

Gregory Peck was on the council to support motion pictures. He was an advocate for training actors and preserving old motion pictures. But that's something that has come about not through great support from the government, but through movie people themselves who have decided it should be done and have set up ways in which it can be accomplished.

SMITH: One of the issues was the question of political influence and how to make sure that the arts did not become a political football, which obviously they have in the last ten years.

WITTMANN: In the beginning it wasn't the case. This was why we first established the peer process to review grants to the arts. We established groups of experts from the various arts who could review requests from their area of expertise. These peer panels met before the council meetings and then made their recommendations to the council as a whole. This was done deliberately to eliminate politics. After some years, a portion of the federal funds were divided with state art councils. Now I think at least 50 percent of the federal funds go directly to the states.

SMITH: How did you feel about that development?

WITTMANN: I felt that the NEA and the NEH on the national level were much more knowledgeable in some instances. However, some state arts councils were excellent and reasonable, such as New York and Ohio. There were probably many others with which I was not familiar. I was also a member of the arts council in Ohio. Of course when art is judged on a political level, then you may lose the objectivity that there was under the peer group system. That is what has happened recently with Senator [Jesse] Helms in the Robert Mapplethorpe case. But I should only be talking about the beginning, in 1964—the only time when I played any great part.

SMITH: At that time it does seem there was quite a bit of opposition to the establishment of the endowments in Congress, and a lot of it was based on the idea that subsidy for the arts was incompatible with the free enterprise system. Did you run into that kind of attitude?

WITTMANN: Yes, there were always people like that.

SMITH: How did you answer it?

WITTMANN: Well, there are always people who are going to object to any cultural enterprise, and Congress represents the entire country. I never felt that the amount of money that was given to this whole project was enough to influence anything one way or the other. I think that artists often need support

and help to a certain extent. Some need it more than others. There's no reason why we shouldn't support art to some extent. There's no reason why art museums shouldn't be assisted in presenting more important art exhibitions than they could have without additional funds. Such exhibits benefit the general public as a whole. The amount of money of course was insignificant and still is, and NEA and NEH grants were usually made to museums on a matching basis. Our country gives less per capita to the arts than any other civilized country that I can think of. It's a fraction of what France and England regularly give to the arts through their various national programs. So it's really not very much and never has been very much. It will always be a political issue because the arts are controversial. There are always going to be people who won't like what authors write. People object to motion pictures, they object to what museums show, but over the years, Congress has continued annual funds for the arts including museums, music, dance, etc. Funds have usually been increased annually but the amount is still relatively small. I think the foundations of the arts and humanities are still very important programs for our country, and I for one do not think that they will ever be abolished.

SMITH: When did you stop being involved in the NEA in a direct way?

WITTMANN: Under our rotating plan, I was on the council for a little over a year, but it was during the critical time of establishing clear guidelines. So it

was a stimulating, constructive period, with some controversy among the various constituencies representing the arts. Subsequently I served for several years on various committees of the council concerned with art museums, conservation of art, and artists. I was very much interested in conservation of works of art and played a significant part in strengthening that program.

I also took part in various other government programs because I felt it was important. For example, Congress established a program to indemnify works of art being borrowed for major art exhibitions. Insurance on borrowed works of art had become more and more expensive to the point where many museums simply couldn't afford to borrow from overseas. Some museums simply canceled all insurance and just assumed that they would take the risk themselves. For some years English museums had used an indemnity program established by British Parliament. The government in England agreed to accept responsibility for works of art borrowed for important exhibitions. The British Parliament didn't insure the art but simply agreed to pay damages should they occur. There had been no claims over a period of years. There were also no claims from American museums on borrowed works of art, but the insurance premiums were very high for very little risk. So a group of us took this to a committee in Congress and said, "Why don't you pass an indemnity law similar to England's?" Under leadership from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, several American

museums, including ours, sought similar legislation from our Congress, and we were successful. I should say that this was a private effort and not a part of the NEA or NEH. Of course Congress only legislates, and leaves establishment of the program to government agencies.

In this case the responsibility for setting up the indemnity program was assigned to one woman named Lani Lattin Duke, who I spoke of earlier, who was employed by a little known government office. I was asked to represent American museums. Together, over a period of some months we worked out a program for implementing the indemnity. Congress had placed a ceiling on the total amount of indemnity which it would carry. We established guidelines for judging conditions of granting indemnity and formed a rotating committee of which I was chairman for the first three years. The committee, which met periodically in Washington was made up of museum directors, registrars, packing and shipping experts, art conservators, etc. We designed applications that requested the essential information: What is the exhibit? How many works of art are being borrowed? What are some of the leading works of art? What is the total dollar value of indemnity to be covered? What will the proposed exhibit contribute to our knowledge of art? Answers to these and other questions were the basis for accepting or turning down indemnification of proposed exhibitions. Also, the total dollar value of all indemnity grants at any one time sometimes

precluded new grants at a specific period. Incidentally, after several years of successful operation (i.e., no claims), Congress has gradually increased the total indemnity, thus increasing the number of exhibitions under the program. There are, so far as I know, no claims to date. So the program costs Congress nothing, but greatly enhances the quality of art museum exhibitions.

SMITH: So you weren't actually allocating money, you were allocating potential liability.

WITTMANN: That's right. There was never any real money allocated. We simply had to keep a control on the total amount allocated at any given time. Probably no significant international exhibition these days comes to this country without support from the Federal Indemnity Program.

SMITH: I'm curious to understand what reasons you might give for not supporting an exhibit. When you say the exhibition quality is not sufficient, that seems very subjective.

WITTMANN: Perhaps you could say subjective, but it was peer judgment by a carefully chosen committee. There had to be standards—not only for quality and for the care of valuable art, but also for what constituted a meaningful, intelligent exhibit.

SMITH: After listening to the tapes from yesterday, it struck me there are two overlapping themes that we've been talking about. One is the increasing

professionalism, self-management and autonomy by arts people, and the other is the growing democratization of the arts—the more professional museums become, the more democratic they become.

WITTMANN: Democratic in what sense?

SMITH: Well, in the sense you were talking about yesterday when you were saying the American Association of Museum Directors started out as basically a club.

WITTMANN: Yes, in that sense, that's very true. However, I would think museums are democratic in the sense that they are now more interested in their communities. Education is probably uppermost in museum planning. That means, essentially, appealing to everyone in the community. Most museums feel that the number of families visiting the museums are not adequate, and they are now concerned with other members of the community who don't understand the museum and are even afraid to enter. Museums now feel they must find new ways to attract these people. That is democratization as I see it, and it is certainly very important to all American museums today. It has come about not so much through the need for funds, because museums are now appealing to people who don't have money, but rather from a desire to benefit the community.

SMITH: Maybe one of the lessons of the Toledo experience is that you can actually get more money from the wealthy if they're convinced that the museum

serves the community.

WITTMANN: Certainly it was true in our case; I've heard about it less in other communities because I haven't seen the interest expressed, and maybe this is part of the character of Toledo, Ohio, which, as I've said, was a manufacturing center with thousands of people employed by three or four great companies. The heads of those companies were wise enough and sensible enough to realize that if their people were happy and content and had some kind of reasonable life they would be better off, the companies would be better off, and the community would be better off. I had only one trustee of the museum who objected to giving money to the Toledo Museum. He said, "We're a national company, we have factories all over the country, and my stockholders would not like it if our company gave to the Toledo Museum and didn't give money to every other city where we have a factory." He then proceeded to give the Toledo Museum large annual gifts from his own personal funds.

[Tape XV, Side Two]

SMITH: To get back to the professional groups you belonged to, another one was the Intermuseum Conservation Association, of which you were president.

WITTMANN: Of course taking care of works of art has become more important as more and more works of art come to this country and come to the museums—old works as well as new works of art. Works of art which were

owned in Europe for centuries have now come to our country. For better or worse we're responsible for them, not only for our generation but for the future, so conservation has become very important. Most big museums have been able to set up their own conservation departments and they hire specialists in that area who work only on their works of art, but what about smaller museums, for instance, Toledo? I never felt we should employ a full-time conservator. There wasn't enough work for him to do in the first place, and in the second place, we just couldn't afford it. So I got to thinking about this, and I began to talk to some of my friends in other similar-sized museums that didn't have conservators, and we decided to establish an Intermuseum Conservation Association of skilled conservators to serve three or four or five medium-sized museums that did not have their own conservators. As these museums were mostly in the Middle West, we had to find a central location.

We decided to establish a central conservation laboratory at Oberlin College in Ohio where the cost of living was reasonable and where professors of science would be available for technical advice. Finally, I think about thirteen museums joined the consortium. We employed as head conservator Richard Buck, who had been head conservator at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum. He, in turn, employed about two or three assistants, and each of the founding museums agreed to send certain works of art to this central laboratory. That was the

beginning and it went on very well; it still exists today. It was the first such cooperative art conservation laboratory in the country. Other museums followed this pattern. There are now, I suppose, five or six intermuseum conservation laboratories around the country, all of whom serve museums in their areas. The National Endowment for the Arts has made grants to it, and the Getty Trust has also made grants for the purpose of establishing scholarships to train younger conservators there.

Now the other group that I notice on the list here is the Arts Advisory Panel of the Internal Revenue Service.

SMITH: I know there were a lot of tax issues involving the arts in the sixties and seventies—tax controversies.

WITTMANN: Yes, the IRS felt it had inadequate methods for valuing works of art. There were two sides to the issue. If a work of art was given to a museum, you could write off a portion of the cost. On the other hand, if an estate included works of art, they would have to be appraised, and that amount would be included in estate taxes. Therefore, if you gave a work of art to a museum, of course you'd like to claim just as much tax deduction as you could, and on the other hand if there were works of art in your estate, your heirs would like to see it appraised at a value just as low as possible to reduce estate taxes. Well, this got to be quite a problem for the IRS, which had only one man on staff who

worked on art. So the IRS decided to establish a group of experts who would meet together in Washington under its auspices to consider doubtful cases.

Invited to make up this IRS art panel were certain museum people, mostly directors and curators, and certain art dealers, because dealers constantly buy and sell art and have to know values. I think there were probably twelve members of the panel, which met periodically in Washington; they were on a three year rotating basis. I was one of the charter members. IRS principals presented cases without ever telling us whether art was donated to a museum or was in an estate—so that we could be objective. We were also never given the name of the owner, although in some obvious cases we recognized well-known art collections. We were simply asked to determine the true value of the given work of art in today's market. In some cases some of the museum representatives might have felt the work of art was not genuine—perhaps a forgery and therefore worth little. The art dealers might agree and say, "We wouldn't buy it." But we never knew whether this was a case of somebody trying to give it to a museum or whether it was found in somebody's estate. They wouldn't tell us that because they knew that might influence our judgment. We were also not given the amount of the appraisal claimed.

Another case: they'd show us a legitimate work of art, and we'd say, "Oh yes, this is a very good example by Picasso, it's a genuine picture." The

dealers would say, "Oh yes, I remember that. I remember when it came into the market and I know what we paid for it and what it's worth in today's market." And the museum people could say, "Well, we acquired one very similar to it and we didn't pay that much for it." In the end, what the panel did was to try to assess a reasonable value which seemed acceptable and honest. The IRS accepted the panel's decision and used that; if the appraisal was challenged in court, the IRS used the panel's assessment. However, members of the panel never testified in court.

As time went on, the IRS began to send cases with photographic illustrations before the meetings, so panel members could consider the material carefully. The initial panel members were carefully and well chosen, and our opinions about successor members were solicited. The initial dealer members were the very best. They were people I knew and trusted, so I felt we were getting good, honest, and informed opinions. This IRS panel still continues today. It is a fair and useful way for the IRS to determine monetary values of art. It took some time for a government agency to realize that art had a real tangible value. This was perhaps another example of the growth of interest in the arts which has increased in the last half century.

SMITH: You were also vice-chair of the National Collection of Fine Arts Commission?

WITTMANN: That was not a very important responsibility. It's a wonderful title, but this is what it was: there is a National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington, which consists of works of art that have been given to our country over many years; it contains some great works of art, and some that are not so great. The art is housed in a large museum, and at the time it was run by a distinguished art scholar. It was decided that an advisory group was needed, consisting of various museum representatives outside Washington. We came together periodically to advise on collecting, housing, what to keep, what not to keep. Somehow the group was called a national commission, but it wasn't very advisory. I was on it for several years. I don't think I had much influence one way or the other. It was a nice group and I liked the collection, which is an important national asset.

SMITH: I note that you have for many years been on the editorial board for the *Gazette des Beaux Arts*.

WITTMANN: The *Gazette des Beaux Arts* is, I suppose, the oldest European monthly publication on the arts. It was founded in 1859 and has always been published in Paris. It is the most serious scholarly art journal in France and one of the few great art journals in Europe or America. While I was asked to be on the editorial board, I haven't really done very much for them. It's a question of reviewing and suggesting contents for the journal. The editor is always a very

distinguished French scholar, and he plans the contents. At present, François Souchal, the great expert on French sculpture, is editor.

SMITH: Did you know André Chastel very well at all?

WITTMANN: Not very well. I knew him, but that was all. He was of course very active in France and played a part in the early days of the Getty—he was one of our consultants. I was also elected to the editorial board of *Art Bulletin*, which is an honor because it is the most distinguished American periodical on the history of art. It is published quarterly by the College Art Association, the national association of college professors and art museum professional personnel. The editorial board, which incidentally included very few museum people, was chiefly involved in the contents of the *Art Bulletin*. When I first knew the *Bulletin* the articles were mostly on old masters. Gradually, articles on contemporary art have greatly increased.

SMITH: So you would review articles?

WITTMANN: Sometimes, if they pertained to my interests. I also wrote occasional book reviews. We met together as a board to discuss a balance of contents and directions for the future.

SMITH: Were you involved with the CIHA [The International Committee for the History of Art]?

WITTMANN: No. I went to some international ICOM meetings, the

International Committee on Museums, which is a division of UNESCO.

SMITH: Were those productive?

WITTMANN: Not very. Politics played a great part. I did not feel it was very productive.

SMITH: In Europe there seem to be strong individuals such as Chastel in France or Anthony Blunt in the U.K., or [Giulio Carlo] Argan in Italy, who kind of centralize art power in their hands. Was there anybody in the U.S. who you felt had that kind of influence or power?

WITTMANN: I don't think so. I think we're so diversified, our country is so big, and there are so many different elements that it is difficult to identify single national leadership. I suppose some of the senior professors at Harvard in the early days might have qualified for such leadership, which is now widely diversified.

SMITH: I'd like to touch somewhat on your decision to retire from Toledo and the decision to stay on the board of directors in a somewhat active role.

WITTMANN: Well, retirement age at the Toledo Museum was sixty-five, which was common in those days, and I was quite content with that; in fact, I was glad to retire. But I wanted to see a normal succession, because I had seen many cases in museums where the trustees made little effort to find a successor until after the director retired. Often this resulted in a year with no director, during

which time an acting director, usually from the staff, had to preside—or worse, sometimes the trustees decided to carry on without a director. I thought that it would be a very good idea if I could find somebody who could succeed me, and indeed that, in a way, is what had happened to me. I had gone to Toledo as the associate director and had spent some years in that position, luckily doing things that I liked to do, like buying works of art. But I felt from the beginning that I wanted to be the next director of the museum, and I expressed this wish to Blake Godwin and to the trustees. Indeed, it worked out that way and I did become director. By that time I knew so much about the museum that it was a very comfortable transition; it worked smoothly and easily. For years before becoming director I prepared the budget for the museum, managed the staff, and acquired almost all the art.

I decided I wanted to do the same with my successor, so I began looking for a good younger associate and found one who I liked very much, Roger Mandle, who had been the assistant director at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Roger Mandle and I shared an interest in Dutch art, but of different periods; he was interested in the eighteenth century and I was interested in the seventeenth century. Roger had written his thesis on eighteenth-century Dutch art, and then he wanted to have an exhibit on this almost unknown field. He asked me if I would like to have the exhibit at Toledo if he could have it at Minneapolis. So

we did the exhibit, which was perfectly beautiful. It was a good scholarly effort, because little thought had been given to eighteenth-century art in Holland—a century in which France dominated. But there was beautiful art produced in Holland in the eighteenth century. The exhibition and the catalog, which Roger wrote, were both very successful.

I kept in touch with Roger after that and learned that a situation had arisen at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts where the director had resigned and there were two assistant directors there. One was Roger and the other was Sam Sachs, who was a nephew of the great Paul Sachs under whom I studied at Harvard. I invited Roger Mandle to join Toledo as associate director, explaining that I expected to retire in three years and if all went well, there would be an opportunity to become the next director.

Roger thought it over and finally decided that it would be a good idea, so he resigned from the Minneapolis Museum and left the job to Sam Sachs, who subsequently became director there. At the same moment, Roger was offered the directorship of another museum at a larger salary. Roger made his own decision to come to Toledo. He had a wonderful personality and everybody liked him. He was also a very good administrator. By the time I reached retirement Roger was ready. The trustees, with three years to judge, chose him unanimously. So Roger Mandle became the next director in a smooth, orderly transition.

When I became director, my predecessor, Blake Godwin, stayed in the community and joined the downtown office of the Libbey Estate, the source of considerable income for the Toledo Museum. Unfortunately, he had great difficulty relinquishing his museum position. Finally, I had to discuss this with the trustees, who, over time, resolved the problem. It was an unhappy situation for me for some years, until Godwin decided to leave Toledo. I didn't want that to happen to my successor. I didn't want anyone to think I was interfering in any way with him. I said, "Roger, the day you become director it's your museum. I'm not going to tell you anything about running it. Also, I'm not going to stay in Toledo."

Fortunately for me, even before I retired I had been asked by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art if I would come out and help them with some problems they had. I told them I couldn't do it while I was the director of Toledo because my time was fully occupied with that and I just couldn't leave. I couldn't even consult with them; I didn't want to get involved. The president of their board and two leading trustees then said, "How about when you retire, because you say you're going to retire when you're sixty-five." I replied, "After retirement, if you still need me I will be glad to come to California." So the day I retired their president called to ask if I would come to California, and I said I would, but I wanted one month's vacation because I hadn't had any vacation in

the last couple of years. My only other requests were that I become a trustee of the museum and a consultant—they could pay me as a consultant but not as a trustee. My wife and I then went to Los Angeles in early 1977.

I remained on the board at Toledo simply because the board wanted me. This was a kind of tradition, and of course I had been a trustee for many years. I only came to meetings maybe once or twice a year. While I would attend I was very careful to do nothing except reinforce whatever Roger Mandle wanted to do. He and I were very close, had worked well together, and I was able to support his directorship.

SMITH: So you didn't remain active in acquisitions.

WITTMANN: No, I didn't. I was careful to express no opinion on art acquisitions. According to the Toledo Museum bylaws, the museum's director was chairman of the acquisitions committee. The day I retired as director, Roger Mandle became the chairman of that committee, and I didn't feel it was proper for me to stay on the committee; it became even more evident a couple of years later when I joined the Getty, where the problem of their system of acquisitions arose, but we'll get to that later.

SMITH: How involved were you in the selection of a successor to Roger Mandle?

WITTMANN: That was a difficult issue. We might as well talk about that

now. Roger had been at Toledo for about twelve years, had been very successful and very well liked at the museum and in the community. He had done many wonderful things for the museum; he brought the museum into his generation instead of mine—he bought much more contemporary art than I ever did. He had gained a national reputation when he organized the first exhibit of El Greco to be held in this country—a big exhibit much of which was borrowed from Toledo, Spain, a sister city to Toledo, Ohio. Roger was clever to capitalize on this relationship and was able to borrow from the Prado in Madrid, the National Gallery in London, and many other major museums. Incidentally, this great international exhibit was insured through this federal indemnity program, which I have already described. It was a very costly show for Toledo, but an enormous success. It gave Toledo, Ohio, national and international publicity. So Roger was in the national limelight by that time, and when the director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, Carter Brown, was looking for an assistant, he came after Roger.

Roger considered the offer carefully, pleased with the offer from our nation's major gallery but reluctant to leave Toledo. He discussed all this with me from the beginning offer. He said, "I've been offered this position, and it's very hard for me to turn it down. On the other hand, it'll be very hard for me to leave Toledo, where my children are in school, and my wife has found a career

for herself and we're well settled." Roger's only sister and her husband, who was a doctor, moved to Toledo, and his parents moved there and his wife's parents moved there—it was a very close family. Finally I said, "Well look, Roger, it's a great thing to be offered the Washington position, but I can't make up your mind for you. You're going to have to do it yourself. if you leave, certainly I think the community would understand." Roger's decision to leave was very difficult for the trustees. They had had no previous experience in replacing directors and turned to me as the only trustee familiar with the field of museum professionals. They did talk to Roger briefly about a successor, and Roger referred them to me for suggestions.

Roger and I sat down and wrote two different lists of possible successors—each list had about ten names on it. Then we compared them, and strangely enough, the same man [David Steadman] appeared at the top of both of our lists. The trustees then established a search to interview candidates. The committee was headed by the museum's president, and I attended all meetings. When we reached a consensus of three names, they were invited to visit Toledo for interviews. We got to the one man who Roger and I had felt should be the top candidate. The committee agreed unanimously that he was the best possibility. He had been the director of the Chrysler Museum at Norfolk, Virginia, and was ready to move on, and so we finally persuaded him to come to

Toledo, but it took a whole year to accomplish. During that time, Roger Berkowitz, associate director, was appointed acting director of the museum. The museum survived because of the wonderfully loyal staff and trustees there who worked together on behalf of the museum, but the year's hiatus proved once again the importance of a smooth transition of directors.

David Steadman was a good, skilled, experienced museum director. He was a good diplomat and a good museum man, with a good eye for works of art. He was an excellent administrator with a great style of his own—different from Roger or me (and better). He was immediately liked by the trustees and accepted by the community. New contributions are coming in and he's bringing good exhibitions to town. He's making good acquisitions, many of which are in the contemporary or modern field, so the whole museum is changing its character under him. It's nice to see that; I never expected that I would see another director, but now there are three living directors, and there have been only five directors in the entire history of the museum. It's an unusual situation for a museum almost a century old!

SMITH: In the remaining time today, let's shift into your California period. You'd mentioned that you had been solicited by people in Los Angeles to come and assist them, which I gather was in the early seventies?

WITTMANN: Well, it was in 1977, because I retired in 1976.

SMITH: Now it was Richard Sherwood who made the original contact?

WITTMANN: Yes he was president of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and he made the initial contact. He's the one who said they had problems and they had to have some outside help with it. He called me and said, "You're the dean of museum directors. You're the man we want. Will you come out and help us?" Another trustee was Ed [Edward] Carter, who had been forming a great collection of Dutch seventeenth-century paintings that I'd helped him start, and the third person was Franklin Murphy, who had been head of UCLA and was a great figure in the community. As I have mentioned earlier, I had known Murphy in Kansas City, Missouri—we both grew up there. He's two or three years younger than I am, I think. I'd also known him when he became chancellor of the University of Kansas, later on. He was an interesting man. He became a medical doctor but never really practiced. He decided after he got his degree that he really liked being in the academic world. He liked being an administrator and was a great politician. He became chancellor of the University of Kansas, and after a few years there he became chancellor of UCLA, a position he kept for a long time. Then he was invited to join the Times Mirror Corporation, a publishing giant in Los Angeles. These three men arranged it among themselves that they would establish a salary for me, which was exactly the salary I'd been getting at Toledo.

SMITH: As you can imagine, at UCLA there are quite a few interviews that look at the history of LACMA and almost all of them have discussions of the malaise that that institution exists in, but it seems that you have a unique perspective, and that's why I wonder if you could recall your assessment of the nature of the strengths and weaknesses of that institution, and why the board of trustees would feel so strongly about the need to bring in an outside adviser such as you to try to set things straight.

WITTMANN: Well, the problem, which they told me very bluntly and frankly, was the director of the museum [Kenneth Donahue]. LACMA was a young museum, and he was the second director. The first director [Richard Brown] had resigned shortly after the museum opened to the public. In building the museum building, there was great controversy, as there always is in Los Angeles—they're controversial people down there—and the museum initially had all kinds of problems. The trustees had been elected from what were considered the leading people in the community. They were all potential donors of either collections or money. There were also great egos. However, the first director was greatly liked and respected. There was also one trustee, Norton Simon, who was a great art collector himself, but a very difficult man. The building, designed by a Los Angeles architect, was also controversial. Finally, when the building opened, the trustees were dissatisfied with the director, who was critical of the architecture.

He was asked to resign, and Norton Simon, a great supporter of the director, declared, "I think I'm going to withdraw all my pictures." Brown quit [in 1966], and Norton resigned as trustee, taking all his pictures, which were on loan in the new museum. Subsequently, the trustees appointed the assistant director Kenneth Donahue as director.

[Tape XVI, Side One]

WITTMANN: Shortly after this unpleasant episode in Los Angeles a man named Kimbell died in Fort Worth, Texas, leaving an immense fortune to build a new museum [Kimbell Art Museum]. He'd been a collector of many mediocre pictures. His money had come from a successful grocery business—not oil. He left everything in a family trust. I met the Kimbell family because they traveled all over the country talking to museum directors about plans for the new museum. They were very nice people with no knowledge about architects or museums. They flew everyplace in their own private plane, because they were true Texans. I remember one afternoon they phoned Toledo from their plane and said, "We're on our way to Toledo and we want to see you." They didn't show up until about 6:30 p.m; they all walked into my office, explained their project and asked if I might be interested in becoming director. I knew nothing about what they hoped to do, and as I was close to retirement at Toledo I expressed regret that I could not be of help at that time. I suggested Rick Brown, who was at that time

without a position. In due course he took the directorship, supervised the building by Louis Kahn, acquired many superlative works of art, and was in fact the best director Kimbell could ever have had. Rick was so pleased to work hand in hand with Kahn on his beautiful building because he had been so disappointed and discouraged with the unfortunate museum building in Los Angeles. So Rick was wonderfully happy in Fort Worth. Los Angeles appointed Kenneth Donahue to be director. He was a good scholar, particularly in the field of Italian painting, but he was a weak administrator.

SMITH: Though there are some interviews we've collected where people say the board of trustees purposely selected Donahue because he would be a weak administrator.

WITTMANN: I don't know whether or not this was deliberate. He was weak, yes, but I think he just didn't know any better. I just don't think he had any ability in that area. He was also a hypochondriac. Although he may have been rather ill, he was spending more time thinking about his own ills than he was thinking about the museum.

The museum was rapidly disintegrating and with inadequate leadership everyone was going in his own direction. This fairly new president realized that it was a serious thing. He didn't quite know what to do about it all, but he asked around about who they could get from the outside to help. He asked people for

advice and apparently many of them said he should talk to me. I don't know why I had that reputation, except that in museum circles it was known that Toledo had been successful. The many new art acquisitions were well known, and the museum was well administered. So I came to Los Angeles, became a trustee and consultant, and had an office and secretary.

SMITH: Did you have actual power?

WITTMANN: Yes, through the trustees. I had the right to go to any of the trustees, but particularly to the three leaders.

SMITH: Did Donahue view you as a threat, or did any of the senior curators worry about what you were going to be doing?

WITTMANN: No, they were all worried about each other; they were all fighting among themselves. Donahue did not consider me a threat, and I wasn't a threat to him as such. I'd known him for years, he was a very nice human being, but he wasn't a very strong, dynamic person. He really cared more about scholarship than anything else. His exhibitions were somewhat scholarly in nature, weren't particularly popular. He realized he had lost his control of the museum staff and didn't quite know what to do. He didn't have enough money to retire; he probably would have retired if he had sufficient funds. He didn't seem to know what to do, and I think he welcomed me as a colleague who might help him. It became quite apparent very soon that the trustees were quite upset

with Ken and wanted to know how they could persuade him to retire, because he was at that time not close to retirement; he was in his late fifties, I think. He was often sick and didn't come to work, and he spent a lot of time at various doctors with one ailment after another, a lot of which I thought were not very serious ailments, but to him they were.

As director, he tended to play favorites. There were certain women on the staff who were obviously favored over others; the rest were just neglected. That wasn't very healthy. The museum had certain strong curators who went over the director to the trustees, who hoped to depose him and get the job themselves, and there were all kinds of factions and frictions going on within the museum. So I simply had to tell Dick Sherwood very early on that the trustees must find a way to retire Kenny by making it possible for him to do so financially. Another director seemed to me the only solution. Soon, I was asked by the president to prepare a list of prospects for a new director. I agreed to prepare a list but said, "You've got to pay them more than you're paying Kenny." I prepared a list of about forty directors who I considered possible candidates, indicating what they were doing and why I considered them possibilities for LACMA.

Well, the trustees couldn't seem to make up their minds, couldn't decide what to do about Kenny, and this went on and on. I continued to attend all

meetings of the board of trustees, where there was much discussion about how to be careful and tactful with some of the potential donors who had money or works of art. It was a board full of people who started off with, "I want this," or, "I want that"—a lot of egos, and some curators attended who were playing games. When I came to an acquisition meeting, the curators would speak up for their own special interests. It was a bad case of trustees and curators ignoring the director. One example of what could happen: the trustees were divided on whether or not to buy an Oriental art object, and finally the discussion between one curator or another curator became so embittered that the chairman of the acquisitions committee said, "Otto, you're new here and you've been very successful in buying of works of art. Would you buy this object or wouldn't you?" I said I wouldn't because I didn't feel it was good enough, and wouldn't really contribute very much to their collection.

SMITH: This was an East Asian object, Japanese, Chinese—

WITTMANN: It was a Chinese sculpture. At any rate, the curator who recommended the object never forgave me and became a serious enemy.

But to return to the list of director-candidates. We narrowed down this list and then interviewed several who didn't seem to be exactly what the trustees wanted—again they had trouble reaching any consensus.

SMITH: We're talking about the trustees as a group. Was there anybody there

who you felt had common sense?

WITTMANN: Well, I think the three I dealt with had as much common sense as anybody. They formed themselves into a kind of search committee to try to focus on what qualities they sought in their next director. Other trustees had other ideas, and even candidates they wished to propose. It really was difficult. I myself would never have taken the director's job at any price. During that same period, as an adviser to the trustees, I wrote a number of papers on what I thought the museum ought to be doing. I thought then that the museum ought to extend its educational activities, which were very minor indeed and mostly run by volunteer teachers. I thought they ought to consider the wishes of the community they should serve, I felt they ought to collect less and to buy fewer but better art works with the money they had, which wasn't much money; and they ought to be more careful in accepting gifts. Well, of course that didn't go down at all well because they tended to accept anything that was offered. These were all the same policies I had followed at Toledo, where I fortunately had fewer and more understanding trustees. After all, the very name of the Los Angeles *County* Museum of Art implied a responsibility to the entire county of Los Angeles, beyond the city. There were many different cultural elements there that weren't even being thought about by the museum. The museum had serious problems with the county, which provided the museum with money and paid all the guards.

The guards therefore had little responsibility to the trustees. The guards were almost a police force. They were armed, and I didn't believe in armed guards in a museum. I didn't feel they should wear uniforms with a badge. But the museum had no control over this county-controlled force. In Toledo I allowed no uniforms, no identification of guards, and certainly no arms.

Meanwhile, Ken Donahue's health was failing and he was seldom in the museum. We worked out a plan with him to retire him gracefully so that he would have considerable kudos, parties, and praise as he retired, and a decent retirement pension so that he could live comfortably. Then we set about seriously trying to find a director. That was not easy because the trustees couldn't seem to agree. Finally we turned up the name of a man who the key people liked, and that was "Rusty" [Earl A.] Powell, who was a curator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and who I had known. Rusty wasn't a specialized art curator, but a general administrative curator, and he was a good administrator. It was Ed Carter who first suggested we consider Rusty, even though he had no experience as a director. He accepted because there was little opportunity at that time for any advancement at the National Gallery.

SMITH: That's ironic.

WITTMANN: His position there was rather minor, I knew that, and it didn't seem that there was much opportunity for growth. Rusty was attractive,

outgoing, a natural "politician"—a man of great charm, with an attractive wife—perfect for Los Angeles, I felt.

SMITH: One of the more frequent criticisms of Powell was that, quote unquote, "he didn't have an eye," that he was not a picture person, particularly.

WITTMANN: Well, I think they felt that at the National Gallery. He never would have become a paintings curator. At any rate, he came for an interview. He just seemed to be the best possible candidate. We had eliminated all the other more scholarly types who I had suggested and had gotten down to someone who wasn't a scholar but who was probably just the right person to head up this rather large important museum in Los Angeles. So he was accepted by the board of trustees, he became the director, and he made an enormous success of it. Rusty was not only a good administrator, he was a great politician. He immediately got on the right side of the county board of supervisors and everybody liked him. He raised money easily and had no problem with wealthy, egocentric people—he got along well with everyone. He and his wife went out every night of the week for several years. The trustees provided a beautiful big house for him in Los Angeles where he and his wife could entertain. He became a great public figure. He delegated decisions on works of art to the curators. The museum went well, it grew well, and Rusty was a good enough delegator to leave to his scholarly people the things that should be left to them, and he gave them a chance to grow

themselves. He reinstalled the whole museum in a different way. The trustees raised funds for a large new addition to the museum. Rusty is certainly the best director they've had, by far. He was much better than Kenny, and much better than Rick Brown, in a way, because Rick was a controversial figure. Rusty was not controversial. Everybody liked him. So when Carter Brown retired as director of the National Gallery, Rusty was well in line for it, and finally in the end he returned to the National Gallery of Art as its director—something that could never have happened had he continued there instead of going to Los Angeles.

SMITH: As a consultant, did you give advice on the museum's acquisitions policies?

WITTMANN: No, I didn't. I was interested in trying to get the museum back in a sensible position where it could contribute something to the community. It was doing a very poor job at that time, I thought.

SMITH: Did you tell the three trustees you were involved with that the board of trustees was not functioning in a healthy manner?

WITTMANN: Yes, I did discuss this with those three people, but it was difficult because LACMA had only a relatively small endowment. It depended upon wealthy people in the community for support. When constructing the original building major donors were permitted to place their names on individual galleries

if they gave enough to pay for that gallery. Every gallery has some donor's name on it, to the extent that one of our friends said to us, "Oh I'm so happy. I feel at home here because my friend has the gallery next to my gallery." Another time, a trustee criticized the museum because it put some of the pictures that he had given to the museum in somebody else's gallery, and he said, "You can't do that. It's got to be in my gallery." This was the kind of egotism that was common at LACMA. There was limited interest in what the museum as an institution could do for the community.

There were thirty-five trustees, most of whom had collections which the museum hoped would be donated. Some of the works of art in the museum were "promised gifts." Often such "promised gifts" were withdrawn by the donors and put in the art market. Some trustee-collectors would say, "Don't buy a certain picture because I'm going to give my painting by that artist to the museum eventually." Often the collector's picture was never given, and for this reason there are odd gaps in the museum's galleries. Norton Simon was a good example. He suggested that certain impressionist paintings not be purchased by the museum because he intended eventually to give examples from his private collection. However, when he resigned from the board at LACMA, his pictures went with him—to be housed in his own museum in Pasadena. So the LACMA collections remain unbalanced.

SMITH: Did you meet Armand Hammer?

WITTMANN: Yes, I knew Armand Hammer and was aware of what he was collecting. I felt his collection was not of great importance. He bought genuine but mediocre pictures, whereas Norton Simon bought outstanding pictures and formed the best collection in Southern California.

SMITH: But did the other trustees realize that they were getting involved with a mediocre collection?

WITTMANN: Ed Carter knew it, and so did some other trustees. Armand Hammer used his collection to publicize himself and his oil business, and of course ended up forming his own collection and museum in Los Angeles. It was Hammer who objected to having his works of art in LACMA galleries which he had not donated himself. That was his excuse for removing his works of art from LACMA and building his own museum as his last great monument just before he died. So it has been a strange, unhealthy kind of situation at LACMA it seems to me, but there it is. Under proper leadership, which they were getting from Rusty Powell before he left, it could have become a great museum. What I tried to do was to get the board to consider how they could develop a policy to serve the community. I talked to them about strengthening the education department. I talked to them about developing more friendly guards who weren't "policemen." Of course I realized that they couldn't do much about that, as the

guards were employed civil servants.

SMITH: So then the Getty situation developed. Were you looking to get away from the LACMA board?

WITTMANN: Not necessarily, but after Rusty Powell became director, I felt I had done what I could do, because it seemed to me that the basic problem centered around the director. Kenny Donahue retired then; he lived on for several years before he died. He was relieved not to have the responsibilities of a director and I think he seldom set foot in the museum again. He lived quietly in the community and I saw a good deal of Ken and his wife, but I think he was much happier in his own library.

We continued to live in the community, and I continued my daily work at the museum. We had rented an apartment in Los Angeles from the beginning. By the time Rusty Powell took over I had developed many friends in the Los Angeles art world. One day Stephen Garrett, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum, and Burton Fredericksen, the museum's curator, came to call on me in my office at LACMA to discuss some of the Getty's problems. By this time Mr. Getty had died. He died in 1976, the year I retired—I never met him. The Getty Museum was then run by eight trustees who were friends of Mr. Getty, and they knew little about art. They were oil men for the most part, and a lawyer or two. With Mr. Getty's death the entire operation of the museum had descended on

them. Until his death Mr. Getty had made all decisions and bought all art from his home and office in England. The trustees used to meet once a year at a dinner party, which Mr. Getty never attended, and that was all. Now they had to meet monthly.

SMITH: None of them were art people?

WITTMANN: No, they were good businessmen. They didn't have to worry about art as Mr. Getty made all decisions from London. He hired the curators and they went directly to him when they found something they wanted to buy. All that changed when he died. Responsibility was suddenly on their shoulders. There was at that time little money for operations, as Mr. Getty's bequest was in his estate at that time. There was no trustee who understood museums and art acquisitions. Garrett and Fredericksen felt that the board of trustees needed someone who could give guidance in these areas. They wanted to introduce me to the Getty board and ask them to consider having me on the board.

SMITH: And you would be the museum expert?

WITTMANN: Yes. And so I said I wouldn't mind doing that, but I still had a responsibility to the Los Angeles County Museum, and I could not do it without talking to them about it. So I soon met some of the trustees at the Getty, and after some exploratory luncheons they invited me to be a kind of adviser. I told them I couldn't do that as long as I was involved with LACMA. They said, "All

we want you to do is to listen to us sometimes and tell us what the problems are." I felt that this was not very practical since I'd only be hearing half the story, and I couldn't offer them any real advice. They persisted and asked me if I would consider taking it on an hourly basis for a while, just to listen to what their problems were. "Well, all right," I said, "I'll listen to your problems on an hourly basis."

By this time, I felt I had just about finished what I could do at LACMA anyway. So I went to the three men there who had originally asked me to join LACMA, and the president of the museum, who was then a woman, Mia Frost. I explained to Mia that I was thinking about resigning, feeling that I had done all I could for them. They now had a good director and the trustees should turn to him for guidance. I didn't wish to interfere with the new director. The president asked me what I was going to do next, and I said I really wanted to go down and help the Getty—I told them the whole story. The board accepted my resignation and I cut my ties there. Then I went to the Getty and said, "Now I'd like to be on your board, but I also need to have a consulting salary"—similar to my former arrangement with LACMA. The Getty trustees invited me as a guest to one of their monthly meetings and then kept me outside during most of the meeting. They finally asked me in because they had some question about a work of art that they wanted me to answer for them. Also, they wanted to know if I

really wanted to be on their board. Finally, they decided to elect me to their board. The question of being a consultant was easy enough, but the question of compensation as a consultant became an issue. However, it was solved in a reasonable way and I was perfectly happy with it.

SMITH: Do you know if they were talking to other museum people at the time?

WITTMANN: No, I was the only museum person they consulted. They knew they needed somebody who knew about acquiring art and about managing museums, and I was already in the community, so I became the ninth trustee. There was one trustee who I talked with a great deal, John Connell, who managed a small foundation that his uncle had established, which gave mostly to the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He was also on several hospital boards, and he advised me, "Well, Otto, I don't care what you have been paid elsewhere, but you should be paid on the same scale as a consultant to the hospitals in this area. You have the professional skills the Getty Museum needs." He volunteered to approach his fellow trustees on this basis, which he did. I am sure he presented the matter more persuasively than I could have. He arranged it all, I had nothing to do with it. So I became a consultant for them as well a trustee, and we legitimized the whole operation. I then began to go to their meetings and find out really how much professional guidance was needed.

SESSION NINE: 28 April, 1993

[Tape XVII, Side One]

SMITH: You have some things that you wish to add to yesterday's discussion?

WITTMANN: Well, it's really an insert into the whole thing, just a series of activities that I thought ought to be someplace but probably aren't. For instance, there were various civic activities I participated in when I was director at Toledo. I was President of the Rotary Club, which was one of the largest Rotary Clubs in the country, with over five hundred members. I was elected salesman of the year by the salesman's club in Toledo, elected public relations man of the year another time, and I was a director of the Toledo Zoo. I have honorary doctorates from the University of Michigan, University of Toledo, Skidmore College, Kenyon College, and several others. I have honors and decorations from the French government, the Netherlands government, and the Italian government, mostly having to do with my work during the war, but also because of the various international exhibitions organized by the Toledo Museum. I was able to bring the ambassadors of those countries to Toledo for the openings of the exhibitions and to present them as speakers before the Rotary Club of Toledo.

As for clubs, I have been a member of the Century Association in New York, the Traveler's Club in London and in Paris, as well as the Harvard Club of Toledo. I was twice president of the Association of Art Museum Directors, a

trustee and vice president of the American Association of Museums, a trustee of the College Art Association, founding member of the National Council of the Arts, and chairman of the indemnity panel, about which we spoke yesterday.

I've talked about the young interns I brought to the Toledo Museum for a year's experience of museum work before they went out into the world. I wanted to mention briefly what some of them had done with their careers after they left Toledo—those who I haven't mentioned before. Millard Rogers, who I didn't mention before, was my assistant; he moved on as director to a museum in Wisconsin, and then he became director of the Cincinnati Art Museum, where he remains today. Marjorie Hearth Beaby became director of the galleries of the Claremont Colleges, California. Christopher Knight became the art critic for the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* newspaper and recently for the *Los Angeles Times*, one of the best art critics on the West Coast. Robert Yassen, one of the interns from University of Michigan, became director of the Indianapolis Museum of Art in Indiana. Katherine Lee became assistant director of the Art Institute of Chicago and is now director of the art museum in Richmond, Virginia. The late Seldon Washington was the assistant director of the Honolulu Academy of Arts, Hawaii. That's a few of the people who have had great success in the art world after their first year at Toledo. They're all people of whom I'm very proud.

SMITH: I have a couple of questions. One is, to what degree did you help place

those people in their subsequent careers?

WITTMANN: Sometimes I helped a great deal; at other times they found their own futures.

SMITH: The second thing is, you were named salesman of the year, which is unusual for an art historian. [laughter]

WITTMANN: That's right, it's unusual for an art historian to be on the board of a bank, the Toledo Trust Company, too.

SMITH: Where do you think you learned your salesmanship skills?

WITTMANN: Just from a wish to make the Toledo Museum useful to the community. I never had any training in selling. But I think it's significant that a museum director was chosen as the salesman of the year. It means to me that the museum and its director had been accepted by the community. I was really quite touched by that, because it's not salesman in the usual sense, but it's the salesman in the best sense of the word, of making art and education available through the Toledo Museum.

SMITH: Let's move back into the Getty. On May 6, 1979, you were elected a trustee of the Getty Museum and began your work as a full-time consultant. I thought we might begin with your assessment of the programs that the Getty Museum had at that time, the needs, and what you saw as the possibilities for growth or development.

WITTMANN: First, perhaps it might be worthwhile to identify the eight trustees who I joined. Harold Berg was the chairman of the board. He was also head of the Getty Oil Company. Some years before, Mr. Getty had bought Skelley Oil Company and with it came its president, Harold Berg. Berg was very close to Mr. Getty and soon became president of Getty Oil. He was an excellent business-man, a bluff, powerful man who got his start in the Oklahoma oil fields.

There was Norris Bramlett, personal secretary to Mr. Getty. He lived in Mr. Getty's great Elizabethan house near London, knew everybody in the house, and was able to get along very well with Mr. Getty. After Mr. Getty died, Bramlett came back to the United States and became the vice chairman of the museum's board. Norris Bramlett really ran the meetings of the museum board because Harold Berg was preoccupied with the Getty Oil Company, which he considered much more important than the museum. Norris took all the minutes of the board meetings, and he sometimes seemed to interpret them to his own understanding. Harold Berg appeared at the meetings if he could, but often Norris Bramlett himself had to run them. Bramlett chose to have a downtown office in Los Angeles where he could run his affairs and also the affairs of the museum.

Stuart P. Peeler was the son of the principal lawyer for Mr. Getty, a very intelligent younger man. He was also a lawyer, a good oil man, and man of

wide interests. He lives in Tucson.

J. Patrick Whaley is a lawyer in the principal law offices of the Getty Oil Company and also the Getty Museum—Musick, Peeler, and Garrett. Whaley does legal work for the museum as well as for the oil company, and has served on the museum board for many years.

Gordon Getty, one of Mr. Getty's sons, is probably the most successful of the Getty stepbrothers, the one who is most stable. He lives in San Francisco, composes and performs music, is very much interested in poetry, and yet is also a very good businessman. He manages his own fortune, which is probably as large as that of the Getty Museum. He continues on the board and is a very able, fine person. He had a stepbrother, Ronald Getty, who was not a very good businessman; he lost more than one fortune and didn't have much money in the first place because he had been disinherited by Mr. Getty. Ronald's mother was a German baroness, one of Mr. Getty's five wives. She had a very strong father, who was also a wealthy German aristocrat. In fact, his family was said to have had more money than Mr. Getty. After Ronald was born of this marriage, Mr. Getty sought divorce. This became difficult because the baroness's father opposed the divorce. Finally the divorce was accomplished in 1932, but Mr. Getty, unhappy about the terms, disinherited his son, Ronald. Ronald received only $5,000 in his father's bequest in 1976, much less than the other Getty sons,

but he had been placed on the board of the Getty Museum. He had somewhat unconventional ideas for the future of the Getty Museum. He also threatened that unless the Getty Museum paid him a certain rather large sum, he would prevent settlement of Mr. Getty's estate and thus prevent the museum from any growth or expansion. This appeared to many trustees to be a conflict of interest—to have the museum, of which he was a trustee, threatened with loss of funds. But Ronald refused to resign from the board. Finally he was paid the amount he requested and he did resign. Settlement of the estate followed. Ronald had lived in South Africa before moving with his wife and children to Beverly Hills while he was on the museum board. Shortly after the settlement, the family is said to have returned to South Africa. A news account in 1992 indicated he had declared bankruptcy in Puerto Rico. At this time no one seems to know where he is or what he's doing. Part of the money he received was placed by him with a German who was an investment adviser in San Francisco, who invested it in various enterprises, few of which were very profitable. So Ronald was apparently not a good businessman, whereas Gordon is quite successful and remains an active member of the Getty Museum board.

Federico Zeri, an Italian scholar of considerable fame, had been put on the board by Mr. Getty because he was an adviser to Mr. Getty on art purchases. However, there were many rumors in the art world that Dr. Zeri also advised art

dealers and was on a retainer to several prominent dealers. So was he playing both sides of the game? I don't know whether Mr. Getty knew this or whether he would have cared. Of course, after Mr. Getty's death Zeri no longer received funds for his advice, but he remained on the museum board for several years after my election, so I knew him quite well. He was openly antagonistic to Burton Fredericksen, and later to the museum's then chairman, Harold Williams, who finally requested his resignation.

The eighth trustee was someone I mentioned before, John Connell, who lived in Pasadena and worked in Los Angeles. He was chairman of the Connell Foundation, which had been founded by his uncle. The foundation used its funds for charitable purposes. John was very much interested in music and had been chairman of the Los Angeles Philharmonic association. The orchestra benefitted considerably from Connell Foundation funds. As I mentioned yesterday, he was helpful to me. He understood nonprofit charitable foundations.

I'll just go over the staff of the museum very quickly again. Stephen Garrett was chief curator and later director. He was a young Englishman who had done some interior decorating for a house Mr. Getty owned in Italy, and he had also done some other architectural work for him in London. He was an architect and designer. Mr. Getty said to him, "I would like you to go over and observe the new museum which I'm building in Malibu. I cannot go. I'm too

busy and I don't fly. You go over, take photographs, talk to the architects, talk to the contractors, and bring back reports to me." So Stephen Garrett made something like thirty trips across the Atlantic during the building of the museum and reported to Mr. Getty in England. When the museum was ready to open, Garrett was asked by Mr. Getty to go to California to take charge of his museum. Getty said, "I'm too busy to return to California, but you go over and take charge of the museum. Take your wife and your family"—he had two young children at that time— "and you can be in charge of the museum and grounds. You'll be the chief curator, because I'm the director of it." So Stephen Garrett came to Malibu.

Burton Fredericksen was the curator of paintings. He was a young man who had grown up in Los Angeles and had worked as a college student for Mr. Getty, taking care of the works of art sent by Mr. Getty to Los Angeles long before the museum building was opened. The first museum was little more than a room which had been attached to Mr. Getty's Malibu house. That museum was open to the public a few days each week to satisfy its legal status as a non-profit institution. Burton was appointed curator of paintings by Mr. Getty, and he reported directly to Mr. Getty on any paintings that he felt should be acquired.

Gillian Wilson was a young English woman who Mr. Getty met in England and liked, and sent to California to be his curator of decorative

arts—mostly French furniture, which Mr. Getty himself had collected. She in turn began to look for French furniture in France and in England and to propose new acquisitions to Mr. Getty. She was very successful in getting what she wanted and has continued to be the curator of decorative arts.

Jiri Frel came from central Europe to New York, where he became an assistant curator of classical art at the Metropolitan Museum. Somehow he met and impressed Mr. Getty, who made him curator of classical art at the Getty Museum. Mr. Getty collected in only three areas: paintings from the Renaissance and later; decorative arts of the eighteenth-century (French furniture); and Greek and Roman art. So those were his three curators, all appointed by him, all reporting only to him, who had no real responsibility to the trustees until after Mr. Getty died. Do you want me to go on with other members of the Getty Museum staff?

SMITH: Yes, I think it would be useful.

WITTMANN: Sally Hibbard had been registrar of the museum for several years before I came there. She is still the registrar of the museum and has developed greatly with the museum. She is a first rate registrar. She is the one to whom I turned to see that accurate art records were carefully kept. As I have mentioned, I organized accurate records in Toledo, and before that in Kansas City. Now there is an accurate and complete file on every work of art in the Getty Museum

and a photograph of every object, all under the control of Sally Hibbard, the registrar.

George Goldner, an interesting young man who came from Pasadena, joined the museum to be in charge of the collection of photographs of works of art used for reference in considering acquisitions. George Goldner was a brilliant scholar in art history, very ambitious, very outgoing. After he had been at the museum for a while, he decided he really wanted to be in the paintings field and persuaded Burton Fredericksen to make him the assistant curator of paintings. Later on when Burton Fredericksen left the position of curator of paintings for a research position at the museum, George Goldner became the curator of drawings. George Goldner had a very good eye and he knew exactly what he wanted. He liked drawings and collected old master drawings himself.

One day, when George was still in charge of photographs and I was acting as chief curator, he came to me and said, "Otto, there's a wonderful drawing by Rembrandt coming up at auction. It's a full-length nude female figure, Cleopatra. I think we ought to buy it for the Getty. It's an exceptional drawing, I don't think it's going to go for a lot of money." I said, "George, you know as well as I do that the Getty does not collect in any field beyond the three in which Mr. Getty had collected"—that was at that time. He replied, "Nevertheless, it's such a great drawing I think we ought to try. Will you bring it up to the board?"

So I did bring it up to the board and they of course said, "You know we don't collect drawings." I said I knew that, but nevertheless, this was an exceptional work of art, and why shouldn't we? They said they just didn't want to get into a new field, Mr. Getty didn't ever collect a drawing, why should we and so forth. I said, "If you'll allocate enough to make a bid at the auction and we get it, I guarantee that I'll hang it with the paintings, because I think it's as good as any painting we've got. We own a Rembrandt painting which Mr. Getty bought—why not put it in the gallery with the paintings?" So with that they said, "Okay, if that's really what you want to do, go ahead." Well, we were lucky. We were unknown in the drawing field, so no one expected us to bid at the auction, and we got the drawing. And indeed, I did hang it in the gallery with the paintings. The trustees had said to me, "Don't ever come back for another drawing, because we're not going to get into the drawing field." George was then referred to jokingly as the curator of drawing—singular. Six months later George again approached me and said, "I've got another great drawing we have to buy." I replied, "Oh, George. I told them I would never come back again with a drawing." He said, "Oh, but it's such a wonderful drawing, we have to have it, and it isn't going to be costly." So I said all right, and I brought up his request at the next board meeting. I had to sell them—that's where the "salesman" reputation comes in!—on the fact that it was a beautiful drawing and

we had to have it. This time I didn't offer to hang it with the paintings, I just said we had to have it. They said, "Okay, but don't forget, we're not collecting drawings. This is just another exception." So again I got the necessary allocation, and again George got the drawing. So now we had two drawings, and George really began to put the pressure on for more drawings, and the board got so worn down that they didn't object very much and we really became serious about forming a collection of drawings. They became an important part of the museum's collections because everything George bought was of top quality. So the drawings grew and now there have been two great published catalogs of the collection. I think there are well over three hundred drawings in it. There's one gallery devoted to nothing but drawings in the museum now, and a special study room for drawings was constructed in the museum where George could store the drawings out of the daylight. That collection became a very important part of the museum.

Some years later, when there was a vacancy for curator of paintings, George Goldner was suggested. This seemed sensible to me, as drawings and paintings are related. It was unusual to have only one curator for two such important areas; however, George was given that job and he now occupies those two positions, which he does very well. Many of the great paintings we have bought in recent years came because of his great eye and ceaseless search for

important works of art. So George plays a very important part in the museum. He's aggressive, he's active, he's very good.

In the early days (about 1979), we had a small library in the museum and we needed to replace the librarian. We advertised and found a young woman, Anne-Mieke Halbrook, who came to see us from Iowa, where she had been head of a college library. She looked at the small Getty Museum library and said, "I think I can handle that." We liked her. I was instrumental in employing professional personnel at that time and she accepted the position.

SMITH: Had you moved into the Malibu building yet?

WITTMANN: Yes, the Malibu museum was opened in 1974. Anne-Mieke was effective and the library grew rapidly. When we began to invite distinguished visiting scholars for periodic visits, we knew they wouldn't come if we couldn't provide the books they needed for their work. So Anne-Mieke asked them in advance for a list of books and then promptly procured them. That's the way she built up the library. Some years later, to my regret, the library was separated from the museum and placed in the J. Paul Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, in a separate building. It has become the best and largest art reference library on the West Coast, and it now has about 800,000 volumes. It's growing all the time; we expect to have at least a million volumes soon. Anne-Mieke is still there as librarian. She has grown enormously. She said to me

once, "Otto, I never would have taken the job if I had known how big it was going to grow, because I wouldn't have had the self-confidence." But she developed the self-confidence with experience over the years.

There's a rather unhappy story about Jiri Frel, the curator of antiquities. He is the only evil curator we've had. It's too long a story to get into now, and he has fled this country. However, he has been succeeded by a woman he had brought in as an assistant, Marion True, who is now the curator of antiquities at the museum and a very able person indeed.

Peter Fusco is our curator of sculpture and decorative arts before the eighteenth century, that is, before the period in France for which Gillian Wilson is curator. Peter Fusco is curator for art objects from the Renaissance up to the eighteenth century. He is responsible for sculpture, decorative arts, and furniture for the earlier periods from Italy and Holland as well as from France. Peter was formerly a curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where I had known him as their curator of decorative arts. He is an excellent scholarly curator with a very good eye, and his area of collecting has grown under his direction.

Thom Kren came to us as an assistant paintings curator in the field of Dutch painting. He's a brilliant young man, very good indeed. When the museum was offered the Ludwig Collection of manuscripts, Thom presented a

complete report on the collection when the offer was brought before the trustees.

I'll just say a word about Mr. Ludwig. He was a German of great wealth. His fortune came from the chocolate market. He had formed a great collection of medieval manuscripts. He then decided to begin to acquire contemporary art and wanted to sell his collection, which by that time amounted to probably two hundred plus manuscripts. He was a shrewd, careful businessman, who, through a chain of agents, offered his valuable collection as a whole to the Getty Museum. Again this was an area of collecting which the museum had never even considered, like the drawings I have discussed earlier. We had no manuscripts. Mr. Getty never bought a manuscript.

Some months before the offer, I had proposed to the trustees a change in the policy for art collecting. I had included the medieval period, so the museum had accepted the period, but not the material—manuscripts. Thom Kren, although an assistant paintings curator was interested in medieval manuscripts. He was requested by the trustees to present a report on the proposed manuscripts and why should we consider buying them. Kren did a thorough job. His report was about forty typed pages, and he went into detail for every one of those manuscripts. He had studied medieval art in college and was well qualified to make the report. Thom so impressed the board that steps were taken to negotiate the sale with Ludwig's agents. There were no laws against the export of works

of art from Germany, so that wasn't the problem, but Mr. Ludwig was a prominent citizen, and he had formerly indicated that those manuscripts would eventually go to German museums, so he himself was concerned with a sale outside Germany. He did, however, want funds to begin to acquire contemporary art. The manuscripts were exported and acquired by the Getty Museum through several intermediaries, including a book dealer in Los Angeles.

For all his careful research, Thom Kren was named curator of the manuscripts. Since then he has added new manuscripts which complement the Ludwig collection, because as in any great private collection, there were missing links. Thom has since published and arranged numerous exhibitions on the manuscripts. He is a remarkable curator and an important member of the Getty staff.

When John Walsh became director of the Getty Museum, he proposed to the trustees that the museum begin to form a photographic collection. The trustees of course replied that the museum's policy did not include photographs, nor did it permit art of the twentieth century. Photography originated in the nineteenth century, but its major growth has occurred in the twentieth century. However, John explained that there was a unique possibility to acquire at one time five or six great private collections at a substantial price. He pointed out that if the Getty were to buy all of these collections at one time, it would

immediately have one of the greatest collections of photography in the country, surpassed only by one or two in Europe. Because he was persuasive, and because he was the new director, we agreed to this purchase in a new field. Then John said, "By the way, I also have a curator for this new field of photographs. We will need an expert to care for the photographs and provide proper housing for thousands of photographs." So he employed Weston Naef, curator of prints and photography at the Metropolitan Museum in New York. Naef is a superb curator of photography and has created a new department at the Getty. The photographs are carefully classified, matted, and placed in steel files away from the sunlight. One gallery in the museum is now devoted to changing exhibits of photographs; it is situated next to a gallery devoted to manuscripts, in which Thom Kren presents changing exhibits every few months. There is also now an adjacent gallery devoted to changing exhibits of drawings. All three galleries have a low level of incandescent light instead of daylight, which would be harmful. There are therefore three new areas of collecting, all with separate galleries and study rooms in the museum. So I have now introduced three new main players on the Getty Museum team.

SMITH: Perhaps this is a good point to discuss the Getty Trust. Where did the idea for setting up a trust come from?

WITTMANN: To explain that, we must go back to the beginning of my

association with the Getty Museum trustees. Mr. Getty's will bequeathed his assets to the Getty Museum. On May 6, 1979, I was elected a trustee and consultant of the J. Paul Getty Museum. I advised the trustees and the museum's director on programs and new administrative procedures. I knew that the bequest was in the Getty estate and that Mr. Getty had given the museum only a small endowment during his lifetime, indicating that he did not intend the museum to grow any bigger. The museum had about thirty-five employees and that's all he intended it to have. He made this clear to the trustees and staff. However, when he died, in 1976, it was found that his will bequeathed all his assets to the J. Paul Getty Museum. The museum was the sole beneficiary. The amount at the time of his death was approximately $700 million, in Getty Oil Company stock.

The lawyer for the Getty estate said, "I don't think I'll live long enough to see this estate settled, because there will be so many suits against it." After all, Mr. Getty had five wives and a number of lady friends. He had five children and many grandchildren, and many of them could have sued. Actually, Mr. Getty had apparently been so generous to all of them while he was alive that there were no suits against the estate except for one. There might have been a suit by Ronald Getty, but I have explained that settlement. There was one suit by a granddaughter who thought she should have more money. The lawyer who took her case to court said to the judge, "This young girl just doesn't have enough

money to live on. Mr. Getty was a wealthy man and he could well have settled a larger amount on her during his lifetime." The attorneys for the estate replied, "We certainly sympathize with this young girl. She's twenty-one years old. She has an income now of a million dollars a year from her grandfather, and we know that she can't live on that; that's really very difficult indeed for a young girl." With that, the court dismissed the case, taking no action.

[Tape XVII, Side Two]

WITTMANN: It did however take several years to settle the large estate. By 1978 the museum was granted some additional funds. After my election in 1979, during those days of limited funds, I attended board meetings and enjoyed lunching with various museum trustees, including Norris Bramlett, who acted as chairman of the museum, Pat Whaley, John Connell, Stuart Peeler when he was in town, and occasionally others. I began to feel that the bequest to the museum was too much for such a small museum. Should we consider doing something for others beside ourselves? Should we consider other programs? The luncheon group, although skeptical, felt that it might be discussed at the next board meeting. So I discussed at the next meeting some thoughts on planning for the future. I felt this was a golden opportunity, before the bequest was released. The trustees however were not very much interested. They said $700 million wasn't an awful lot in the oil business. They felt they could cope with that

amount perfectly easily when the bequest was received. I tried to explain that the amount was a great deal in the academic world, it certainly was more than needed for the present museum, and we should plan now for future expansion use of this sum. But there was little interest from my fellow trustees.

By March 1980 I had written a memorandum to the trustees setting forth in greater detail my thoughts on future use for the bequest, and drew up a chart to describe a new organization to be known as the J. Paul Getty Museum Trust, which would provide for broader activities beyond the museum. Pat Whaley, the lawyer, had explained to me that a trust was legally possible, but that we could never become a foundation like the Mellon or Ford foundations. In this report I suggested an umbrella organization at the top, which could administer various divisions and which might be called the J. Paul Getty Museum Trust. Under it would be the museum, which would certainly be the most important part of the organization, but only one part. I recommended a separate research center, which probably would house the library, because visiting scholars had inadequate space to work and study in the museum. The library would have to grow. I pointed out that there was no great art reference library on the West Coast; all the significant libraries were on the East Coast, and scholars would be reluctant to be without an adequate library. So a research center-library could be another division. I also felt that the Getty should support mid-career scholars by

providing sabbaticals to allow them to complete books or research projects, and provide funds to assist in publishing books, as art books especially were costly because of the necessary illustrations.

My report also recommended support for the American cultural outposts in Europe. For example, the American School in Athens was founded in the middle of the last century. There were also the British and German Schools in Athens, all doing archaeological research in Greece. The American School is the only one that is privately supported. In the case of the German and the British Schools, support is supplied by their national governments. Another example was the American Academy in Rome, begun by a group of architects in the nineteenth century. At that time architects felt it necessary to study classic architecture. More recently, the American Academy offered opportunities to scholars in archaeology, artists (both painters and sculptors), as well as architects. Again, the German, French, and British Academies are all supported by their governments, while the American Academy was privately supported. Another example I cited was I Tatti, the villa near Florence where Bernard Berenson had lived. Berenson had bequeathed it to Harvard, and it was used as a graduate center for art historians. It was supported by Harvard through private funds. It is also a very important American scholarly asset. Some partial support by the Getty might make a substantial difference.

Finally, I recommended limited support for music, probably for composers rather than performers. To this report was added an organization chart, with the suggestion that the Getty board discuss this at one of its meetings in the autumn.

SMITH: And what was the date of that report?

WITTMANN: The date of that report was July 17, 1980. I might quote here a section from an earlier draft dated March 21, 1980. [reads a section, as follows] "The trust or operating foundation under the will of J. Paul Getty will receive funds from his estate. The trust will hold and invest the funds through outside managers and banks, and dispense income in accordance with the terms of the will as administered by the trustees appointed under terms of the indenture of December 2, 1953. The trust will employ a president to be chief executive officer and will establish an administrative, planning, and financial office under the president to provide a structure for reasonable control of the funds and expenditures of the income. Three operating divisions under the trust are suggested." One was administrative and planning, one was a vice president for architectural expansion—that's for further building—and then there would be directors for the various programs which I've just described: academic institutions; art-historical publications; public programs outside the Getty; and public education in the arts, including film, television, journalism, radio and so

forth. All these were programs I suggested setting up under the title of the J. Paul Getty Museum Trust.

When we discussed this report at the next board meeting, the only part the trustees really liked very much was the idea of getting a paid president who could implement plans for the future. They realized that sooner or later the estate would be settled and money would be available. The trustees decided to seek a paid president and I was one of four trustees who formed the search committee. My idea was to find a man of high academic standards to operate the development, much like the Mellon Foundation in New York, for which I had great respect. At that time the Mellon Foundation had as its president the distinguished former president of Williams College. The Mellon Trust had almost as much money as we were going to have, but it operated in a simple brownstone building in mid-Manhattan. It had a very small staff, perhaps about thirty. Andrew Mellon, who had initiated the National Gallery, had founded it. At that time, his son, Paul Mellon, was its chairman. It was a sensible, economical operation, run effectively by a staff of considerable academic standing. What I probably didn't clearly understand at that time was the great difference between the operation of a foundation and a trust. The trustees began the search by consulting with college presidents. Stuart Peeler knew Derek Bok, then President of Harvard. Bok suggested that as his own responsibilities were

on the East Coast, we should rather consult with a great West Coast college president, and he recommended Franklin Murphy, former head of UCLA. Franklin Murphy agreed to make a list of ten or twelve names. We had several luncheon meetings to discuss the list.

Harold Williams was one of the names suggested. He grew up in Los Angeles, had gone to UCLA, and then to Harvard Law School. He became a lawyer and an expert in taxes for Norton Simon Industries. He was very successful and soon became president of Norton Simon Industries. Later, Franklin Murphy asked Harold Williams if he would consider becoming dean of UCLA's business school. Williams agreed to do so, at a great salary reduction. He soon changed the direction of the school so it became the Graduate School of Management, one of the finest in the country. When Carter became President of our country, Harold Williams was recruited to head up the SEC [Securities and Exchange Commission].

It was just at the end of the Carter presidency that we decided to seek a paid president, and Williams was considering his future. He was interviewed at lunch by the search committee, and it was their decision that his background of businessman, lawyer, government executive, and academic dean covered every need of the Getty. He was offered the position. Williams was intrigued with the possibilities of this new enterprise and in due course decided to accept our offer,

which admittedly was not as lucrative as a legal position might have been. He insisted on the title President and CEO—the CEO seemed very important to him. At that time he had a wife and several grown children.

After Williams accepted, while still in Washington, he telephoned me one day and said, "Otto, I don't know very much about art or art museums, but I'm going to learn, and I think I can learn pretty fast. Who are the principal people in the field?" I replied, "Well, you're living in Washington still, why don't you see J. Carter Brown? He's director of the National Gallery. Then go to New York and see the director of the Metropolitan Museum." Next thing I knew Carter Brown had a dinner party for Harold and saw that he met everyone important in art circles. Harold is indeed a very quick learner, and in a short time he knew most of the trustees of the National Gallery, one of which was Franklin Murphy, by the way. He went to New York, where another dinner was given by the director and trustees of the Metropolitan Museum. When he took up his position at the Getty, he very soon deposed Norris Bramlett, who had been in charge of the Getty's downtown office under the aegis of Harold Berg, who was busy with Getty oil company. Norris Bramlett was given another office, few responsibilities, and Williams took over Bramlett's office.

SMITH: Did Bramlett take offense at this?

WITTMANN: There wasn't anything he could do about it. Harold moved into

his office and began to plan for the future. I had given him a copy of my earlier report to the trustees. Very soon he reached the decision that the name of the central body should be changed from the J. Paul Getty Museum Trust to the J. Paul Getty Trust. In my report I wanted to retain the word "museum," but Williams decided on the title J. Paul Getty Trust. So this "fictitious title," a legal term, was applied for and granted.

One day, some weeks later, Williams said to me, "I have just employed two young women for the Getty Trust. They're going to join the trust office, and I think they're both going to play an important part in our future operations." One of those two women was Lani Lattin Duke, who I spoke of before in connection with the government indemnity program and also the Getty's educational program. The other woman was Nancy Englander, who I had known when she had been head of the museum program for the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington. Within the NEH they had a small division for museums, and she had appeared at various museum meetings to explain the endowment's programs for museums. Later, she had left that position—I don't know why—and became head of the MacDowell Colony Foundation in New England. The MacDowell Colony had been established by [Edward] MacDowell, who gave his house as a retreat in the summer for musicians mostly, but also others in the arts. Nancy left that position also and was living in New York.

She was married and had a small child. Lani Duke became head of a new education program for the Getty Trust and developed the discipline-based art education program for schools which I spoke of much earlier and which has now spread to schools across the country.

SMITH: Well, was the board of trustees supportive of that?

WITTMANN: Yes. They were always supportive of Lani Duke.

SMITH: She had been head of an organization related to the California Arts Council.

WITTMANN: Yes, she was greatly interested in art education, especially as it related to other historical studies in school curricula. She also understood the West Coast. She was bright, able, intelligent, and persuasive. She has had a great effect in art education within school systems throughout the country.

Nancy Englander was quite a different kind of person. She was used to planning government programs through her experience on the National Endowment for the Humanities. She thought in broad concepts, and I believe that Harold Williams felt she would be helpful to him in planning the future programs for the Getty Trust. Soon after her arrival at the Getty, I gave her also a copy of my earlier proposals to the trustees. Harold gave her the title Director of Program and Analysis, which meant that she had a lot to do with the formation of the programs that came out of this whole thing—

SMITH: Out of your original document.

WITTMANN: Yes, probably this must have been a core, but of course over time, the programs developed, modified, and changed in varying degrees. The music program dropped out very early; nobody liked that idea except Gordon Getty. I always liked music in art museums, and John Walsh in recent years has brought lovely and popular music programs to the Getty Museum.

Nancy began to discuss and analyze what the Getty Trust should do with the soon to be available large funds. Soon, the Getty Trust organized a one-day meeting at the Century Association in New York, bringing together about twenty-five museum directors, curators, and scholars in art history. Harold chaired the meeting and Nancy of course attended, as did I. Harold discussed the Getty Trust and its potentials and announced that he intended to establish advisory committees to meet periodically with various divisions of the trust as they were established. He did implement this successfully and these committees still meet regularly. Nancy also contributed a great deal to this Century Association meeting because of her knowledge of the museum and art-historical committees.

Subsequently, Nancy Englander's position at the trust grew rapidly. She became a real support for Harold, and soon it became clear that the people in the trust office had to see Nancy before Harold. Nancy had divorced her husband before moving to California with her small child. After some months, Harold

decided to divorce his wife. The developing relationship between Harold and Nancy became obvious to the staff at the trust. It became even more difficult to discuss necessary business with Harold without first seeing Nancy, but this did not directly affect other museum staff or my relationship as adviser.

SMITH: How did the trustees feel about this?

WITTMANN: The trustees only learned gradually as the situation began to affect the work of the trust's staff, and it became a subject of some concern to them. At that point, Harold recommended to the trustees that Nancy become a trustee. This resulted in an executive meeting of the trustees, without Harold. The trustees' decision at that meeting was that Nancy should resign. This she did, taking an important position in Capital Research, a Los Angeles group of mutual funds, where she has been successful. After his divorce, Harold and Nancy were married.

SMITH: Now much of what they did was an elaboration of what you had put forward in your rather lengthy document, but how much were you involved in those continuing discussions, and how did you feel about the kinds of directions that emerged?

WITTMANN: I took little part in the discussions between Harold and Nancy, but as the programs for the most part implemented my earlier suggestions to the trustees, I was satisfied with the outcome. After all, Harold was now the

president and CEO and the only one who could implement the programs.

Harold continued to consult me on curatorial personnel, on important works of art, and on the choice of John Walsh as director. Once or twice, Norton Simon came to us at the last minute to ask if we wanted to join him in buying a painting with his museum—not a good idea, but we did. The idea was that we would have it six months and he would have it six months. For a long time Harold talked regularly to Norton Simon about combining the two collections, but he was never successful.

SMITH: I guess what I'd like to probe a little bit further is your perception of Harold Williams's management style when he was hired and your evaluation of how that's worked out, because the incidents that you've recounted indicate a highly personalized management style, which can be troublesome, and this style was actually also characteristic of Norton Simon.

WITTMANN: Certainly Harold's management style could be characterized as "highly personalized." However, in many instances he was a great value to the trust. Soon after the Getty estate was settled, Pennzoil offered to buy all assets of the Getty Oil Company. The museum owned about one third, Gordon Getty and the Getty family who he represented owned an equal amount, and Getty Oil Company owned approximately one third. Therefore the three principal owners would have to agree to sell.

[Tape XVIII, Side One]

WITTMANN: Gordon, with his own natural enthusiasm I suppose, seemed to like the offer, and as he was a board member of both the museum and Getty Oil Company, Pennzoil may have considered this enthusiasm as an agreement to sell. Gordon signed no papers, and I don't know whether or not he had made up his mind to sell his share. Certainly we had not made that decision, nor had the Getty Oil directors, and Pennzoil had stipulated sale of all shares in Getty Oil Company.

SMITH: He wasn't in a position to commit the company then?

WITTMANN: No, he couldn't commit the company or the museum. While this matter was being discussed, Texaco made a much larger offer. Their offer was cash rather than stock in Texaco, which is what we wanted. So all agreed, and we signed to sell for cash to Texaco. Pennzoil then sued all three components, as well as the individuals concerned, including all the Getty Museum trustees. (For legal purposes, the Getty assets were considered in the museum, not in the "fictitious title," Getty Trust).

SMITH: In terms of this decision, was there unanimity on the museum board of trustees?

WITTMANN: Yes, the trustees agreed to sell to Texaco.

SMITH: So there was no division of opinion?

WITTMANN: No. Gordon of course agreed because it meant more money for him and his family, and the Getty Oil Company agreed for the same reason, and we agreed for the same reason and because we would receive cash, not stock. We would have to divest the trust of all assets in one stock anyway. The suits continued for more than a year. Many lawyers, high costs, high stakes. That was the time when Harold was enormously valuable because he knew the necessary New York lawyers through the SEC and negotiated for the trust the best lawyers available. In the end, Pennzoil lost, Texaco won, we received our money, and all, including the trustees, were freed from any further suits.

SMITH: So you must have felt like you had suddenly been plunged into a very alien world.

WITTMANN: Yes, although as a museum director, I dealt with many lawyers, but not with a suit of this magnitude. We were fortunate to have Harold Williams as our chairman. He was a good lawyer himself. He had learned a lot through his work with Norton Simon and then the SEC. Being Dean of the UCLA School of Management must also have been helpful. The Getty Trust's share of money from Texaco was almost $3 billion by that time, an enormous increase from the $700 million first received from the Getty estate. The trustees were then faced with investing that amount, and again Harold Williams's leadership was valuable. The funds were divided and placed with at least eleven

or twelve different investment advisers around the country, some specializing in fixed assets, some in equities. The investments were carefully monitored by Williams and the trust's treasurer's office, and regular reports were made to the Investment Committee of the board, of which I was a member. It has worked out well and the trust now has almost $4 billion, so the investments have grown. As I mentioned earlier, I had felt that a good academic administrator such as a college president would have been a good trust president. I now feel Harold's extensive background has proved of greater value in the business of the trust.

On the other hand, the many divisions of the trust may not be as cohesive as they might be, and the goals not as complementary as they could be. This may be partly a question of rapid growth, or perhaps lack of a clear vision of the ultimate purpose. It seems to me the organization may have grown at a rate much faster than may have been healthy. We now have some eight hundred employees, whereas there were only thirty-five when I first became a trustee in 1979. That's pretty fast growth over a short period of time. And while the growth may have been necessary, it might have been more sensible if we'd expanded the programs a little more slowly and considered our overall purposes a little more carefully.

SMITH: Didn't you have a legal requirement to spend some phenomenal amount of money every year?

WITTMANN: Although our official title is The J. Paul Getty Trust, we are in legal terms a private operating foundation which creates and administers its own nonprofit programs, and as such we are required by U.S. tax laws to spend 4.25% of the average market value of the trust's endowment on these programs in three out of every four years. However, this legal requirement has never been the driving force. We have always spent more than the requirement. The driving force was the decision to grow very quickly. There were great ambitions very early on and they came from Nancy and Harold. Among them was the idea to create a new and vast Getty center in a new location. It was quite obvious, once we got thinking about it, that the present museum would not be large enough. The property on which it is placed is not very large. It was an old lemon ranch, and there wasn't room enough for the kinds of activities I had suggested earlier and which Harold had persuaded the trustees to develop.

SMITH: I'd like to talk about that later, when we talk about the building committee. What about the aspect of the application of management principles that may have been developed in finance and industry to an essentially academic environment? There seems to be a considerable amount of time spent in the Getty organization on budgeting and program evaluation—much more time than one would spend in a university or any other museum, as far as I can determine.

WITTMANN: Well, that's probably due to Harold himself; his own corporate

background has made him that way, but it's not all bad. The budget is carefully watched. If you're going to build an organization that will grow as fast and as quick and as broad as this one has, you've got to have some pretty tight budget controls on it, or it could easily get out of hand. There are monthly meetings of the directors of each of the branches of the Getty. These are helpful to both department heads and the president.

The Getty Trust is a well run business. It's very carefully watched. We have a very good treasurer, Joe Kearns, who has a good staff, and together they watch income and expenses carefully, as well as investments.

SMITH: I don't mean to be overemphasizing the negative, but I do get a sense there's a subtext that's very close to the surface in things that you've said over the last half hour, that on the other hand, despite all these positive things, there are times when you do feel that an academic manager would have provided a more positive atmosphere.

WITTMANN: Certainly, a different atmosphere, but I don't know that I would say "more positive." It may have worked better, I just don't know. If we had been a foundation instead of a trust, it might have resulted in some differences. In the early days I often referred to the Mellon Foundation, which I greatly respected, but Harold would reply, "Yes, but remember that's a foundation. They don't operate their own programs as a trust must, but they give money to

others to use for operations of which the foundation approves."

SMITH: But to a certain degree that's a choice that the Getty Trust has made.

WITTMANN: No, the Getty Trust didn't make the choice—that choice was made by Mr. Getty in his will. However, much more recently, the Getty Trust has found a way to make relatively modest grants to help scholars to publish books. It is called the Getty Grant Program. However even in this grant program there is a committee of the trustees which meets regularly to approve all grants, which have been previously approved by expert peers in the applicant's field.

SMITH: But that's standard for granting agencies.

WITTMANN: Yes, it is. There have already been over three hundred books published by university publishers, which bear the words, "With the assistance of the J. Paul Getty Trust." These are important, scholarly books which might have been so expensive that few scholars could ever buy them, and perhaps some libraries and universities could not. These grants often enable prices to be reduced.

SMITH: I guess the point of my question though was that this was a choice that was made along the line, and I was wondering about your insights as to the reasons for that choice and how it fit in with the conception of the overall program that the board of trustees wanted to develop.

WITTMANN: When Harold first announced at a board meeting that a grants program was to be established, I asked, "How can we do that? We formerly understood that this could not be done under the terms of our incorporation." The reply was that it would always remain a relatively small program and that it would be permissible on that basis.

SMITH: I'd like to go into the committees that you are working on, but I have one more general question which has to do with the separation of powers and the relationship between the corporate management world of the Getty and the academic programs—how it's supposed to work in theory and how it's worked out in practice.

WITTMANN: Powers and relationships fundamentally rest on a good structural chart in organization, with each of these divisions reporting up through the line to the president. Each department director requests his own budget and then receives a budget within which he must operate. I know best of course about the museum, which is only one department under the trust. John Walsh is my idea of a very good director. He's a strong, knowledgeable man in the field of art and is knowledgeable about museums. He's respected by all other museum directors, is well liked by his staff and the trustees, and is very successful. But he and Harold sometimes may see things slightly differently. There are times when they have a problem understanding each other.

SMITH: Well, that may be normal, and it may even be salutary.

WITTMANN: Yes. They are both reasonable men, although Harold is essentially a corporate businessman in his thinking, and John is basically interested in the museum's services to the public and its growing art collections.

SMITH: But at Toledo you had a situation where you were in charge of developing the program and the corporate people were in charge of overseeing that the program you were developing was feasible from an economic point of view.

WITTMANN: And from a community standpoint.

SMITH: And from a community standpoint. But it seems at the Getty you have a situation where the corporate people are involved in the daily operation of the program and actually to some degree in the theoretical conceptualization of the programs, even though they may not have the training to do that.

WITTMANN: Yes, I think that's true. This is a basic difference between a museum with extended programs and a trust of which the museum is only one part. Years before the Getty Trust was initiated, the National Gallery of Art in Washington wished to do many of the same things the Getty Trust now does. But under Chairman Paul Mellon, the National Gallery has always been the controlling entity. It receives the budget, which provides for exhibitions, an extensive research library, a visiting scholar program, and the complete

professional curatorial staff. The National Gallery runs the programs. I don't think I ever talked to the trustees in Toledo about who I was going to hire as a curator, or who was going run the library or anything like that.

SMITH: But you did submit those names for ultimate approval didn't you, or did you just hire them and the paperwork got done?

WITTMANN: I hired them and the paperwork was completed in our office. Afterwards, I saw that new staff met the trustees and saw that the trustees understood what the staff did. I was careful to give staff members credit for their work. In the end staff and trustees became good friends. There was lots of good feeling between them. But I was also careful not to allow cliques between individual staff members and trustees. However, in some museums trustees want to know candidates before they are hired. This is of course not proper delegation of responsibilities.

SMITH: Have there been issues of tension between the board of trustees and Harold Williams as the CEO? Have there been issues in which there have been programmatic differences?

WITTMANN: A great part of board meetings was devoted to business and financial matters—very little to programs. More recently, greater attention has been given to programs, and now one afternoon and evening is devoted to an in-depth visit to one division, with an analysis by the division head.

SMITH: What about issues concerning the direction of the trust as a whole? I'm not saying that these were issues where one party or another had to prevail, but simply questions of different perspectives.

WITTMANN: There were some differences in perspectives, some caused by widespread geographic diversity of the trustees. Over time, the original nine trustees before Harold's arrival have now been augmented to fifteen. Harold has proposed new trustees and the other trustees have accepted most of them. They come from various parts of the country, they represent different sectors; some of them are business executives, some lawyers, some are investment managers.

SMITH: Any scholars or museum people?

WITTMANN: Vartan Gregorian, President of Brown University, is a scholar as well as administrator. Kenneth Dayton served on the board of the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

The fifteen trustees came together periodically for three or four days of board meetings. Only a few lived in or near Los Angeles. This was appropriate as the trust began to develop programs throughout the world. The trust also had no need to seek funds from its trustees, so it was unlike the boards of most museums. It is unlike any museum I ever knew because in almost every other museum, including the great Metropolitan Museum, the trustees come from the city which benefits from the museum—they are museums of cities—and this

means that trustees are in closer communion with the museums. The Getty president has to meet with the trustees only once every other month and now they don't meet in the summer, so there are less than six meetings a year. The infrequent board meetings mean reports for the president, treasurer, other executives and some department heads take up most of the time. There is little opportunity for in-depth discussions.

SMITH: Most museums have something equivalent to tenure, don't they?

WITTMANN: Few have formal tenure. Most museums are operated more like businesses.

SMITH: And there hasn't been any demand from the staff—at least the academic-level staff?

WITTMANN: At Toledo, our instructors wanted academic tenure and rank. This was solved to everyone's satisfaction by transferring them to Toledo University. There is no tenure for other staff, including curators, but, as I have said before, the same curators I employed in the seventies and earlier are still at the Toledo Museum.

[Tape XVIII, Side Two]

WITTMANN: At the Getty Museum, when it became necessary to replace the first director and later to ask for the resignation of one or two curators, it was Harold Williams who negotiated this, not John Walsh—although of course it was

jointly agreed in advance in the case of the curators. There is a great effort to promote from within the staff, which is always informed by memoranda of any openings.

SMITH: This afternoon I wanted to move on to the committees that you were involved with. I thought we should start with the acquisitions committee, and connected to that is your service as acting chief curator from 1980 to 1983, and more generally your involvement with the operations of the museum. It seems to me that the first thing you did was to rewrite the collecting policy, because the Getty Museum, from everything I've heard, had a somewhat second-rate collection in the mid-seventies, in very limited areas, and at some point you had to come up against the boundaries of what Mr. Getty had done and convince people that the Getty Museum could be a lot more than what he had established.

WITTMANN: While this is what ultimately happened, the sequence may not have been that direct. As I have already mentioned, Mr. Getty collected for himself in three areas: European paintings from the Renaissance up to the end of the nineteenth century; French eighteenth-century furniture, which he liked and for which he had an unusual understanding; and Greek and Roman sculpture, which had been a long time interest. It was of course his decision to design his Malibu museum after an early Roman villa at Herculaneum that was destroyed by a volcano and known only through eighteenth-century archeological drawings. I

said to the trustees early on that a private collector ought to be able to collect anything he wanted to, bottle caps on up if that pleased him, because it was his own collection; however, the Getty collection was now a public museum, hopefully accessible to everyone, and so the trustees had a responsibility to present the history of art to the visitors in a more complete sequence. I said to them, "If you're looking at the history of art, you can't ignore the whole medieval period from the fall of Rome up to the Renaissance; that was a period when cathedrals were built, precious objects and sculpture created, and extraordinary manuscripts produced. Certainly art of this period should be included." While some trustees agreed, others wished to carry on with what Mr. Getty had done: he gave his bequest to the museum; therefore, its contents should only express his own interests.

We discussed this over a considerable period and I wrote a paper on the subject. In it I suggested other areas to round out the collection, so the Getty could become a more general museum. In addition to French furniture which Mr. Getty liked and collected, there were many other kinds of decorative arts important in the history of art: sculpture, ceramics, glass, and objects from many other countries. It also seemed to me that there were certain areas which the Getty should avoid. We were the newest museum in the Los Angeles area; there were already several established, older museums. With our potential wealth, we

might prevent the growth of these museums in fields where they were already well established. I questioned, for example, whether we should collect contemporary art, because the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art had just organized and was seeking funds and gifts of art. There was a real need for this new museum, and we should encourage it, not stifle it. It seemed to me there were other areas to avoid, such as Oriental art. Sitting on the rim of the Pacific, one might certainly say that we ought to be collecting Oriental art, but there are already good Oriental collections at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and Norton Simon has an extraordinary collection of Indian bronzes in his museum. There was no reason for the Getty even to begin collecting in these areas—we should let the other collections expand and grow. Later on, when we began to acquire drawings, which I've described earlier, I felt this was a legitimate field for us because drawings are the very foundation for most paintings. Still later, when John Walsh became director, he introduced photography. We agreed to expand our collecting policy to include this new field, and we had the unusual opportunity to acquire not only a large collection at one time, but also a distinguished curator of photography.

After Harold Williams became president, he felt the policy on collecting art should be more clearly defined. So Harold and I jointly produced a revised collecting policy which explained more clearly and in greater detail the reasons

for the policy. This second version of my original policy was then accepted by the trustees as its official statement. John Walsh later wrote his own version, but they were all essentially the same as this first, with some refinements and extensions.

SMITH: I understand that the upper date limit for the museum's works of art is 1930. Do you know how that specific date came to be chosen?

WITTMANN: No, I simply stated that the Getty should not actively collect contemporary art because the Los Angeles County Museum was active in this area, as was the Museum of Contemporary Art. The Pasadena Museum had the Galka Scheyer collection, and many other excellent works by contemporary artists of California. When Norton Simon took over that museum he had no great interest in contemporary art, and he did not add to that collection. There is no such upper date of 1930 in our policy. Of course, once the trustees agreed to collect photography, the upper date in that field was flexible, although the historic aspect of photography is very important in that collection.

SMITH: The Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities has a rather impressive collection of Fluxus art, and I guess other things relating to neodada and neofuturist movements. Is that something that just sort of happened fortuitously, or was there a decision to focus on these aspects of experimental contemporary art?

WITTMANN: The director of the Getty Center made his own decisions, with agreement from the president. The Center always had its own budget and no acquisition for the Center's archives ever came before the Getty's acquisition committee. No acquisitions made by the Center were ever reported to the trustees, although all art acquisitions for the museum were always meticulously reported to the trustees at each meeting, following careful decision by its acquisition committee. No explanation was given for this difference.

On only one occasion, very early on, Kurt Forster, first director of the Getty Center said to me, "I understand that I am to give you a report of our current acquisitions for consideration at the regular meeting of the acquisitions committee." I brought the report to the acquisition committee meeting, but was informed by Harold Williams that acquisitions of the Center were not to be brought up to the acquisitions committee. Aside from some interesting exhibitions in the Center's corridors, which are usually based on some aspect of the their collections, little is known of the now extensive collections.

SMITH: So the acquisitions committee focuses purely and solely on the museum's acquisitions?

WITTMANN: Purely on the museum, yes. It started as a museum committee and while it is now a trustee committee, it is only concerned with museum art acquisitions.

SMITH: You were chair of that committee?

WITTMANN: Yes, it came about in this way: when I first joined the board of trustees of the museum, I found that the meetings were devoted to operations and finance of the museum. At the end of a long day of business the curators were invited to appear and present slides of works of art they proposed for acquisitions. The curators were then excused, and the trustees voted on the proposed acquisitions.

SMITH: And none of these people were art people except for you and Federico Zeri?

WITTMANN: No, that's right. The curators simply explained verbally, with no written reports and only a few slides. Their task was seldom very professional—simply a sales job. This was no fault of the curators, but their appearance was brief at the end of an all-day trustee meeting. Gillian Wilson, curator of decorative arts and the only female curator, often said lowering the neckline of a blouse never seemed to hurt the prospects. After one such long day, one trustee suggested that there must be a better way to consider works of art. Remember, this was before the Getty estate was settled, so there was little money for art acquisitions anyway. I suggested that perhaps we should follow a pattern used in almost all other museums. I explained that most museums had an art acquisitions committee, before which curators presented a serious scholarly

proposal on which that committee could then make a more informed decision. That decision could then be reported to the entire board in a succinct and informed way. Harold Berg, who was then trustee chairman, said, "That's a good idea, Otto, and since it was your idea, you be chairman." And then he asked who wanted to be on the committee, and several trustees volunteered, including Gordon Getty. That was the beginning of the acquisitions committee.

I was then chairman and realized I would have to explain this new approach to the curators with tact, because it would come as a surprise for them. My purpose was to make the process of acquisitions more professional. Most of the curators had had little or no experience in other museums. They had been employed directly by Mr. Getty.

SMITH: Were they art historians?

WITTMANN: Yes, art historians to some degree, but not necessarily experienced in negotiating art acquisitions. Gillian Wilson had little formal art history. She learned by doing, and is quite knowledgeable in her own field. She worked at the Victoria and Albert Museum for a short time, was employed by J. Paul Getty as a curator, and moved to California. Jiri Frel was the only person who had any real scholarly knowledge, but he turned out to be so dishonest that he finally lost his job. I have already spoken of Burton Fredericksen, who was curator of paintings. During his lifetime, Mr. Getty held all the acquisitions

funds and made all the decisions himself, so the curators' knowledge and ability was not so important as it would be later. Later curators such as George Goldner, Marion True, Thom Kren, and Weston Naef are all competent art historians as well as excellent curators.

As soon as the acquisitions committee was established, as chairman I did what I had earlier done at Toledo Museum, and that was to devise a printed form to be completed by the curator before presenting a work of art. The form included the name of the artist, the title of the art, the dates of the artist and the work of art, the medium, prior history of ownership, the dealer offering the art, and cost, why the art was significant for the Getty collection, other examples similar to the proposed art already in the collection, similar examples in other museums, and the significance of the proposed example in the history of art as well as in the artist's work. All these questions had to be answered in typed form.

The curators objected strongly at first but soon realized that no works of art would be presented until these forms were satisfactorily completed. It committed them to serious scholarly judgment and of course the process made them more serious and better scholars. It has demanded a great deal of time and research, but I felt it was absolutely essential because we were spending considerable amounts of money—and why shouldn't art be researched as carefully

as the stocks and bonds which the Getty's finance committee recommended to the trustees? The acquisition committee meetings became serious and of greater interest to its members. The curators gained greater self-assurance. They distributed the completed reports to the committee members, spoke, with slides or the actual object if possible, and afterwards the committee voted in executive session.

SMITH: I have been told that Harold Williams is actively involved in the selection of pictures, not just through approval, but he actually takes part in the negotiations for the work. Is that accurate, or does that occur just with major acquisitions?

WITTMANN: Harold attends all acquisitions meetings, is much interested in the information presented, but doesn't take part in the acquisition process unless there are serious problems. One example. The van Gogh painting *Irises* was a complex deal because it had been sold by Sotheby's to an Australian businessman, and the transaction later appeared to have involved a loan by Sotheby's to the buyer. The buyer took the painting but subsequently was not able to complete payment. Sotheby's was able to reclaim the picture but of course could not resell it at auction. The Getty was approached to make a private sale. The picture was important, the Getty wanted it, but only at a much lower price than the alleged auction price, which by that time was considered to be an

artificial price involving the Sotheby loan. That was a complicated negotiation in which Harold did participate. The Getty did finally obtain the painting and it remains one if the public's favorites.

SMITH: Were you involved with the van Gogh purchase?

WITTMANN: No, I was not involved directly—only as adviser.

SMITH: Were you still on the acquisitions committee?

WITTMANN: Yes, I was on the acquisitions committee, but the acquisitions committee was concerned with whether we should acquire the picture and if it could be negotiated.

SMITH: So you discussed it more from the content point of view: is the picture an addition to the collection.

WITTMANN: Yes. The great cost of the van Gogh (which has never been revealed) did stir considerable discussion among the trustees about the cost of art. The media also began to criticize the amount the Getty spent for art, although the Getty has never revealed art costs. This discussion took place over several months and the final outcome was settlement on an annual budget for art acquisitions (the amount of which has also never been revealed).

SMITH: You were also chief curator for a period of time?

WITTMANN: Let's go back to when Harold Berg was board chairman. In December 1979 I was elected vice chairman of the board of trustees; that was

because there were times when Harold Berg could not get to the meetings, and he wanted a vice chairman to take over in his absence, which I did on one or two occasions. I was appointed chief curator in December 1980. I also continued to hold the position of vice-chairman of the board of trustees until after Harold Williams became president and CEO and asked chairman Berg to rescind the position of vice-chairman, which he did.

SMITH: Perhaps we should discuss here Stephen Garrett's resignation as director.

WITTMANN: Yes, that was after Harold Williams's election as president. After Harold assumed the position of president and chief executive officer (May 1, 1981), he soon felt that Stephen Garrett was not a satisfactory director, but it was not until November 1982 that he finally brought himself to request Garrett's resignation. Stephen had many friends among the staff. He was happy-go-lucky, charming, witty, attractive. After his wife died, he never remarried, seemed at ease with the support of his two children, and his life seemed busy but rather empty. He had little depth in the community. He was a playboy who loved to party. It seemed apparent to me that if the museum was to grow that it would have to find a skilled, able professional director, and I discussed this often with Harold Williams. At first Harold argued, "Leave Garrett as director and bring in a chief curator and maybe eventually the chief curator will succeed the director.

I know you don't want to continue being chief curator." I said I certainly didn't, and I told him I had only accepted the title to hold the museum together. So I began to ask my friends, including John Walsh, and half a dozen other good curators or directors, if they would consider becoming the chief curator. It soon became apparent that no responsible candidate was willing to serve under Stephen Garrett as director. John Walsh was one of them who said, in a more tactful way, "I'm perfectly happy in Boston, I have no reason to want to come out to California." It was therefore decided that Stephen Garrett must resign so that the museum could seek a competent, professional director, and he did, in November 1982.

I had known and liked John Walsh for some years and had tried to persuade him to consider several museum positions. He was uninterested until the directorship of the Getty Museum became vacant. I recommended him strongly to Harold, who first wanted to consider several other candidates. In the end, John Walsh seemed the best choice, and he agreed to accept. This was a happy day for the Getty. I still feel he is the most accomplished museum director in America today.

[Tape XIX, Side One]

WITTMANN: Before Garrett's resignation, John wouldn't even come to California to discuss possibilities, so I suggested to Harold, "Go and meet this

man when next you are on the East Coast." Which he did. No one would consider the position, and that's why I had to continue the title of chief curator until 1983.

SMITH: How involved were you at that time, or even after John Walsh came, in shaping the acquisitions policy? Were you actively involved in the selection of the pictures and the determination of priorities?

WITTMANN: Yes, of course. That was, I believe, my chief contribution to the Getty. I tried to set standards, to persuade the curators to judge the difference between really important works of art and just mediocre works of art. I also tried to emphasize within the museum as a whole the important areas that ought to be stressed. For a long time we didn't buy very many paintings. We bought classical art, Greek and Roman art, simply because Jiri Frel was a very aggressive curator and proposed many acquisitions. Gillian was also a very strong, aggressive curator and always had some furniture that she wanted to buy. But Burton Fredericksen's painting department was rather weak.

One time I remember talking in an acquisition meeting about what we ought to be collecting. I felt that when people thought of works of art, they thought first of all of paintings. I suggested that the Getty Museum was somewhat unbalanced with its strong representation of sculpture and furniture, and I suggested more time and money be put into the paintings. That discussion

took place after John Walsh arrived, and he agreed thoroughly. Harold Williams liked the idea and for a long time we stressed paintings, much more than we had before, and that's why it became even more important to get the right curator. When Burton Fredericksen resigned as paintings curator, we had a somewhat disorganized replacement from Canada, who didn't work out, and soon we appointed George Goldner as curator of paintings. George is so aggressive and so good that there have been no problems since he took over. Good paintings have come in great numbers because George is so active and John Walsh has so strongly supported him.

SMITH: Were you also out snooping around for pictures as you had been when you were at Toledo?

WITTMANN: No, not nearly so much, because I had a different position. In the first place, I was a trustee, not an operating member of the staff. Secondly, we had these curators whose job it was to do this, and I would be usurping their position if I did. I still went to New York and Europe and continued to see dealers I had always seen, because by that time they were very good friends. I remember being at Wildenstein's in New York one day and being shown a Monet still life which they had just received. I thought it was a beautiful picture at a rather reasonable price, so instead of taking that back to the board or the acquisitions committee, I told Burton Fredericksen about it—he was the curator

then. He went to Wildenstein's, saw the picture, liked it and the acquisitions committee acquired it.

There is a real difference between a trustee's responsibility for governance and the museum staff's responsibility for management and operation. For a trustee to interfere seemed unethical to me, and while we all know examples of other museums where trustee interference with staff is common, I have always tried to avoid this at Toledo where I was director, and at the Getty where I was a trustee. Occasionally I have been in London with John Walsh and we have looked at art on the market together, and more than once he and I agreed on things the Getty ought to buy, but John would always be the one to propose the acquisitions through the acquisitions committee.

SMITH: I said earlier in the morning that there seems to be a consensus that the Getty collection in 1976 had been rather second-rate. Would you agree with that?

WITTMANN: Yes, I would. When I first saw the collection it was second-rate, except for French furniture. In the first place, it consisted of many pictures which Mr. Getty himself had bought. He listened to advice from dealers and everybody else, and he never was willing to spend much money on paintings, so he almost always got inferior pictures. Mr. Getty employed Burton Fredericksen as curator of his small early museum at Malibu. Burton had no eye and had to

depend on others for opinions on pictures. I've already told you much earlier about the Rubens painting [*Rubens and His Family*] that was dismissed by the Getty Museum and LACMA because it had been repainted. When I was still a trustee working at LACMA I went over to the Getty one day to see Burton, who was an old friend, and at that time he was the curator of paintings. When I asked if he was going to buy the Rubens he said, "Well, I don't know. I've thought about it, but there's a restorer of paintings who has an office in the County Museum, Ben Johnson, and he looks at all the pictures around town before anybody buys them because he has a better understanding of the conservation of works of art than anybody. I showed the Rubens to him the other day and he said that the picture has been repainted." So the picture went back to the dealer, and there was no way I could persuade Burton otherwise. Of course, as you'll recall, John Pope-Hennessy, the great English scholar and curator at the Metropolitan, then persuaded Mrs. Wrightsman to buy the picture for that museum, and it is regarded as one of the finest paintings by Rubens in America—no question about it. Now that's one of Getty Museum's tragic losses, and one example of why the Getty Museum's collections aren't better. It's getting better all the time, but it's going to be a slow process. I'll tell you one more story about Ben Johnson and then we'll get off of that.

One day I walked into the office of Kenny Donahue, then director, and

there lying on his desk was a photograph of a marvelous painting of the *Repentant Magdalen* by Georges de La Tour, the distinguished French seventeenth-century painter. It was a picture I had seen at a dealer's gallery just before I retired at Toledo. I didn't have the money to buy it for Toledo at that moment. Donahue had also seen it at the same dealer. I asked him what he thought of it and he replied, "Well, I liked it, but Ben Johnson looked at the photograph and he said it's all been repainted. He said it isn't even by Georges de La Tour." I said, "Kenny, I've been in this business much longer than you have, I'm much older than you are. That's one of the greatest pictures you could ever acquire for LACMA. If you really want to retire one day in glory, buy that picture." So he offered it at the next acquisition meeting of LACMA. I was present as the newest LACMA trustee and urged its purchase. The trustees liked it, LACMA bought it, and everybody now agrees that it's one of the greatest pictures in their museum. Ben Johnson caused the loss of the Rubens to the Getty and almost lost the de la Tour for LACMA. It was too bad that his opinion was taken without question, but it is perhaps an indication of how unprofessional and how naive many people were in Los Angeles even a short time ago. That kind of thing probably wouldn't have happened in New York, Chicago, Cleveland, Toledo, or Detroit, but it did happen in Los Angeles. So perhaps any knowledge I could bring to Los Angeles at that time was simple and

easy to do. I suppose any good professional could have done it, but it just happened I was there at the proper time to be helpful.

So to return to the Getty's search for a chief curator. Harold Williams agreed that it would be necessary to replace Stephen Garrett. John Walsh was then invited to be the director, not chief curator. He accepted, and from that day forward Getty Museum began to become a significant museum; it will continue to grow in quality and size, so long as Walsh is there. He's just been a great director. He took over immediately and the best thing he did of course was to bring the curators up to standard. He made them become professional and continued what I had tried to do with them. He was present at all acquisitions committee meetings and always supported the curators. He held curatorial meetings beforehand so he knew exactly what they were going to say and what they were going to do, and they still complete those written forms. The Getty became a real museum with John. Even the guards perked up—just a different standard completely, and it was wonderful to see all that happen. So I felt that it was time for me to begin to withdraw from any active guidance of the museum. I saw to it that John attended all art acquisition meetings, and whenever a curator spoke and I felt that he hadn't explained a work of art clearly enough, I asked John to comment further. John is a great natural-born speaker, full of enthusiasm, and his comments were always convincing. As the trustees came to

know him better, he then played an increasing part in the acquisitions process.

In the meantime, the trustees established a plan to rotate the chairmanship of the acquisitions committee, and so after ten years I ceased to be the chairman of the committee I had initiated, but continued to be a member, which I still am.

SMITH: At Toledo you had taken a second-rate collection and transformed it into a first-rate collection. Is it possible in today's situation, with the great number of museums, to create a first-rate collection?

WITTMANN: I doubt it. It isn't a question of increased museums, but also the great upheavals of art which follow any great war are about over. There just aren't so many important works of art available at any price. John himself has said, "The Getty Museum is never going to have a big collection. It's never going to have an encyclopedic collection. It's going to have a small, carefully selected collection of beautiful works of art." He feels that's all we can expect, and I would agree with him.

SMITH: Sort of like the Frick model then.

WITTMANN: Yes, I think he's aiming toward that kind of model—small but of great quality, and I think he's right. The Getty Museum will never be a big museum, but we may become a very choice museum, and that's what John's working for and that's what I'm behind. If I could create another Frick Collection, that would be my idea of what a great museum should be.

SMITH: What are the acquisitions that you've been involved with that have turned the Getty Museum in the direction of becoming another Frick?

WITTMANN: I think that the van Gogh that we bought, the *Irises*, is a great picture. There's also a wonderful picture by a sixteenth-century Italian artist, Dosso Dossi, not a great name, but as you know I'm less interested in names than I am in the quality. In 1983, when my wife and I were in Europe we heard this picture was available and went out to a house in the country to see it, where it was stored in a closet; the house was leased for various meetings and the art was stored for protection. I felt the Getty should acquire it, and finally they did. It is an enigmatic but beautiful picture. It is still just titled *Mythological Scene*. I was involved with the acquisition of other European works of art which seemed important, such as Pontormo's *Portrait of Cosimo I de' Medici*, which had actually hung in the Frick; Mantegna's *Adoration of the Magi*; Dieric Bouts's *Annunciation*; and works by [Hendrick] Terbrugghen, Jan Steen, [Jan] van Huysum, Manet, Monet, Degas, and others. Later on, when Peter Fusco became curator of sculpture and decorative arts, some extraordinary objects in his field were acquired. Gillian Wilson added objects of great quality to the fine French furniture which Mr. Getty had already acquired.

SMITH: Was there any debate about acquiring the Ensor or the Munch?

WITTMANN: Yes, but not much. The Ensor [*Christ's Entry into Brussels in*

1889] was John Walsh's find; it was offered to the museum. It had been hanging for some years at the museum in Zürich. I used to see it there, and I thought it belonged to the museum. It turned out it didn't; it belonged to a private owner who decided to sell it. John immediately knew what it was and enthusiastically felt it was one of the greatest pictures we could ever get. It was in almost perfect condition, had never been damaged. He had to negotiate the price because the owner wanted a lot more than John thought we should have to pay. John then presented the picture at the acquisitions committee because he knew there'd be controversy. When it was acquired it was hung in the museum's corridors, because it's 169 inches long. It is difficult to see there, but it is a modern masterpiece and will be spectacular in the new Getty Museum building, which will be much larger than the Malibu villa.

SMITH: It also seems to stretch the collection in another direction.

WITTMANN: Absolutely, and it was far beyond what any of us had thought about collecting. I knew Ensor but wasn't as enthusiastic as John was about it. John said, "This is an extraordinary opportunity. This is Ensor's masterpiece—his most important painting, as well as a landmark in the history of modern art." The trustees didn't understand it and some didn't like it.

SMITH: They didn't like it from a content point of view?

WITTMANN: It's not an easy picture to understand. If you look at it and have

no knowledge of its meaning, it seems confused. But John explained it very carefully. He said, "Just because it was painted by a Belgian we may not realize that it was a turning point in the history of art; it's one of the greatest things that could be bought." He spoke eloquently on behalf of the picture and it was acquired. I was not so convincing in my discussion as John, as I didn't understand it so well at that time. He really knew what he was after and he got it.

SMITH: What about the Munch, *Starry Night*?

WITTMANN: That was acquired in 1984, before the Ensor, which was bought in 1987. John was also immediately enthusiastic about the Munch and felt we should acquire it. I was chairman of the acquisitions committee, and I knew it was going to be difficult for the trustees to understand. But I looked at it carefully myself and decided it was a marvelous picture. I really liked it very much, but it was brought before the acquisitions committee and they didn't like it. They couldn't understand it. I spoke on its behalf. It wasn't really modern; it was painted in 1893 by a Norwegian artist but it was such a precursor of what was going to come later that I felt we ought to have it. The trustees were generally willing, in most cases, to listen to the opinion of their professional staff who knew what they were talking about, and to me, and often they gave in on that basis. When it was placed in the galleries, it was not a popular picture at

first, but I'm always surprised that so many people now like it.

SMITH: I have two general questions. One is, what was the effect of the Norton Simon question on the Getty acquisitions program?

WITTMANN: Very little. He didn't try to influence us very much except in the two cases where he wanted us to buy a picture jointly with him.

SMITH: I was thinking about the degree to which he may have hinted that the Simon collection might come to the Getty.

WITTMANN: There were never any serious discussions of this as a possibility, although Norton Simon and Harold Williams were close friends and must have discussed this among themselves.

SMITH: Part of the folklore of the Getty is that it has unlimited funds and that this affected the art market because you could buy things that nobody else could buy. Is that a correct description of the situation, and what did you do to prevent the Getty from becoming a predator in the market?

WITTMANN: The myth got around that we had $3 billion to spend for works of art. We did have that of course after the Texaco settlement, but it was capital. It was carefully invested and only the income would have been available. Much of that was needed for the large new programs being developed by the trust at that time. The trust had about eight hundred employees by that time, most of whom were professionals who commanded good salaries, so the payroll was

large. And then in the background was the concept of the Getty center, with new buildings to be constructed.

As I've already mentioned, the museum had difficulty finding enough money to buy the art we thought we should buy. The trustees and Harold Williams himself would never set a definite annual budget for art at that time. So while funds for art were relatively large, they were not nearly so large as the media and public imagined. I think most people now realize that we have not ruined the art market. In fact, I said very early on that the sensible thing to do would be to set a limit on our spending for works of art. If we were going to bid at auction, we set a price beyond which we would not go. Curators made an estimate which was then adjusted or accepted by the acquisitions committee. That figure could not be exceeded.

SMITH: That's fairly common practice for museums, I understand.

WITTMANN: Yes, it is generally done, although the myth existed that the Getty had no limit. Actually, as auction prices soared in the late seventies and early eighties, we often lost art. Very few people know that. We lost not to other museums but to private individuals, and it became general knowledge that there were individuals in this world, not only in America but in Europe and the Orient, who at that time were willing to pay much more than we. One example is that Australian businessman who bought the van Gogh, which we later acquired at a

much lower price. But there were many other examples where we lost things to private individuals. Some of that money had been made since World War II, and art seemed like a safe investment for their great fortunes. It also helped their ego to be able to say that they could afford to pay high prices at a public auction. There was a lot of ego connected with those auction sales. I felt, however, that we couldn't have the reputation at any price. We shouldn't try to outbid all competition. I felt we should get used to the idea of losing some art. The curators and some trustees found this difficult at first.

The other side of the coin, which we must admit, is that we have more money to buy works of art than any other museum. That's true of the British museums as well as the American museums; we have a larger budget for acquisition of works of art. But, after all, the Metropolitan has over a hundred years of collecting in back of it, at a time when pictures cost very little. We have to pay in today's inflated currency. So while we have the money, we are trying to use it in such a way that we may end up having a good, small, selective museum with art of great quality which will always be there, not for an individual but for the public. After all, it was J. Paul Getty who built the Malibu museum and bequeathed his fortune to it so that everyone could enjoy the museum and its art and could benefit from the varied programs available to all. Occasionally, an object we lost at auction to a private collector would come into

the market again at his death and the museum could buy at a lower price. More than once, Gillian bought a piece of furniture that she had lost at a previous auction. The owner would decide to sell, and she would buy it at a lower price. She did that successfully several times.

So it is true that we have a lot of money, but when you ask me if I could form another collection like the one in Toledo, I would have to say no. In the thirty years when I was buying two-thirds of the art now in the Toledo Museum, prices were a lot less than they are today. Today we don't have the choice that I did. In my day I could be offered three or four Rembrandt paintings any time I went to London. Today you'd have a hard time finding one important example.

SMITH: Okay, let's move on to the building committee, which was a second, very important committee you served on.

WITTMANN: Well, I have to tell you that, yes, I was on the building committee but only later, after most of the major decisions had been made. The trust's first committee was named the site committee. That was a small committee of about six people. Harold Williams wanted eventually to build a large complex of all the Getty divisions, much larger than the museum in Malibu. That was apparent from the beginning. This concept could not fit on the site where the present building was because there wasn't enough land. So the question was how to find a new site, and Harold and the site committee set out to

find sufficient real estate to purchase. Finally, a large piece of property was found on a wooded hill where the San Diego freeway crossed Sunset Boulevard. It was owned by a man who had intended to build housing there. He was a wealthy landowner, who had never carried out his intent for that undeveloped property. The Getty Trust was able to buy it and in due course the additional adjacent undeveloped land, so that in the end we owned about 700 acres. Only a small portion of this is being developed for the Getty center; the remainder will simply be held as protection.

SMITH: Did anybody anticipate the opposition that would come from the neighborhood?

WITTMANN: No, we didn't anticipate that problem. There were some 107 government conditions that had to be met before construction could even be started. In the beginning the effort was centered on finding the appropriate architect to design this rather massive undertaking. Harold Williams and Nancy Englander led the site committee on a tour to visit architects in America and Europe. I was not on that committee. Richard Meier was chosen—a prominent architect already well known for museum, commercial, domestic and other architecture in the United States and Europe.

[Tape XIX, Side Two]

WITTMANN: A site on a hill with access only through an underground parking

garage at the foot of the hill seemed somewhat remote to me. I would have preferred a ground-level site, but the site committee felt that was impossible to find. We did talk to the federal government about some land it owned near the Veteran's cemetery in Westwood. The Veteran's Administration owns a large tract of land there, but had no interest in any negotiations for it. We also talked to UCLA, which owned land adjacent to their present campus, but of course it was reserved for future expansion. So we acquired the present site. It is a beautiful location from which one can see the ocean on one side, and on a clear day you could see downtown Los Angeles, but access may not be convenient.

SMITH: The Getty already has the reputation of not being a museum for everybody.

WITTMANN: Yes, but it should be—and it may be—often beautiful locations attract crowds, even though they are not easily accessible. Consider Yosemite and other national parks.

SMITH: Even though it's free, it's virtually impossible to park at the Malibu museum.

WITTMANN: That's right, parking there requires advance reservations. The Toledo Museum was fortunate to be located in the center of town on a main street on ground level. As our visitors changed over the years from walk-ins to automobile drivers, we spent considerable funds to buy up surrounding property

for large parking areas and to create a new welcoming museum entrance adjacent to the parking. That could be done with a ground-level museum.

Of course, at the new Getty center, the museum, restaurants and some auditoriums will be open to all visitors, but the other buildings, such as the art reference library, conservation laboratories, administration and service buildings will be restricted to employees, researchers, or specialist visitors. So while many buildings may serve limited personnel, the total area of about twenty acres on the hilltop may not be too crowded and may become a beautiful dramatic area to visit as a great natural viewpoint.

SMITH: It's basically the material that's on the second floor of the current museum that's moving over to the new museum?

WITTMANN: Yes. The only objects to remain in the present building will be Greek and Roman art. The Malibu museum will be a special museum for Greek and Roman art—the only such museum in the United States. We have enough art, some now stored in warehouses, to fill the new museum. The Malibu museum has enough Greek and Roman material so it can expand to the second floor. It will be comparable to the Cloisters in New York, which is a specialized museum of medieval art, whereas the present Getty Museum will become a specialized museum of classical art. There are a number of decisions to be made for the Malibu museum: How will conservation of the classical works be

handled? Will we have a special library there for classical art? What will we do with the classical scholars who come—will they be at Malibu, or will they be in the new center? We haven't solved those problems yet, but there will certainly be two separate museums, and John Walsh will be director of both of them.

SMITH: Getting back to the building, what were your responsibilities on the building committee?

WITTMANN: Mostly aesthetic questions and museological questions. The building committee's job was to look at architect's plans as they developed, look at the models of placement of the buildings on the site, and visits to the site to inspect necessary work on the land, which at that time of course was undeveloped. It was a slightly larger committee than the site committee—there were about eight or nine trustees on it. The committee was there to assist the architect to understand the needs of the various divisions and to make committee reports on progress of the plans at each general trustee meeting.

SMITH: Did you work at all with Richard Meier in his office?

WITTMANN: I didn't work with him but I went to most of the meetings which were often held in his office. As new models were developed, he would discuss them. I was of course most interested in plans for the museum and the innovative design for the new library and scholars' offices. John Walsh has offered continuing advice on the museum building and has offered many

significant alterations in the plans for the museum. Meier could hardly be expected to have detailed knowledge of the needs of the many varied specialists on the Getty staff, and it is as liaison between the staff, with their special needs, and a fine general architect that the building committee has been most helpful.

SMITH: To what degree was there tension between aesthetic theory, or aesthetic principles, and pragmatic questions?

WITTMANN: It was perhaps most evident in Meier's general architectural concepts. It is well known that his designs reflect the clean, simple, modern style of the Bauhaus school of the 1920s. He has a predilection for white metal surfaces, much glass, and outside stairs with metal pipe railings. The trustees wanted buildings which would be sympathetic to the golden brown California landscape. So a compromise had to be reached on building surfaces. Trustees preferred stone cladding whereas Meier preferred white enamel steel. Travertine especially cut and surfaced in Italy will be used, and where curved surfaces make this impossible, enameled steel of a soft gray color will be used. Some "trade mark" outside stairs have appeared, but on the whole the buildings and their placing will be very attractive.

SMITH: To what degree were you involved with working with Frank Gehry on the Toledo Museum building?

WITTMANN: To a greater extent than with Meier and the Getty center.

SMITH: Frank Gehry and Richard Meier are both prominent names and they represent, in some ways, diametric opposites of contemporary architecture. I think it would be interesting to get you to compare them as creative people.
WITTMANN: While Meier is an excellent architect, and it must have taken great self-assurance and courage to undertake the Getty project, I feel he is a retardataire architect. His designs are clean and cool but do relate more to the Bauhaus style of the 1920s than to today's postmodern styles.

Frank Gehry's just the opposite. He is full of ideas, constantly thinking, constantly changing; he's the most creative, dynamic man I've ever met. When you see him in his studio he's constantly walking around changing things, making little sketches, saying to some of his associates "Let's do this, let's try that." To me he represents what's going on today. I got to know him when I first came to Los Angeles and visited some of his buildings, but I was not a close friend. When Toledo began to consider a new building for the museum's art school, it had to find an architect. So the trustees began a search. After considering several different architects, some of the school's faculty suggested Frank Gehry. As I was still a trustee of the Toledo Museum, but living in Los Angeles, I was asked to visit Gehry in Los Angeles. So one of his associates spent a day or so showing me Gehry's buildings in Los Angeles—domestic, corporate, and that wonderful public library.

SMITH: Oh, the Hollywood public library.

WITTMANN: Yes. I thought it was absolutely superb. We looked at some of his houses, which were exciting, elegant, and very dramatic. Meier, on the other hand, had built a large house on large acreage in the country near Los Angeles; it was all white in the midst of a beautiful landscape—rather cold, even forbidding to me. But I was very impressed with Gehry and made a favorable report to the Toledo trustees. The Toledo trustees, however, felt they wanted an addition to the museum in the same style as the 1912 building. My response was, "Yes, I think it's a perfectly beautiful 1912 neoclassic building, but we're talking now about the end of the century, and how can we possibly build a building that imitates something that was built very early in the century? It's almost a century later, and the new building ought to reflect our times, just as the first building reflected its time."

Well, that was okay in concept, but when you got to talking about Gehry's plans it was a different thing; they thought it was an awful looking building. I said, "You may think so, but my friends who run the school and all the professors there think Gehry's great. They're all for him." But the trustees said, "They don't count. It's our money. We're building this building, it's got to be next to our museum, and we don't want it there." Although the art faculty liked the Gehry concept, the trustees seemed adamant in opposition. I then wrote a

long letter to David Steadman, Toledo Museum director, stating why I thought that it was important that we build a building that was contemporary. I also told him I thought Gehry was a creative, imaginative architect who would probably build a building which many people would not like, but it would become a famous building, a building that Toledo could be proud of twenty-five years from now. The letter was so strong that David Steadman had it reproduced and sent to all the trustees before their next meeting. The trustees decided at that meeting that if Wittmann, a good, conservative director who's lived in this community for thirty years and served on bank boards believes in it, they did too. So then and there they voted to use Gehry, based on that letter. Gehry and the Toledo contractor worked well together. This contractor started out working from Gehry's early sketches, and as things grew, Gehry would produce finished drawings.

The steelwork that went up first was hard to believe, and as it began to rise on the property immediately adjacent to the museum, questions began to arise. It only got worse as time went on, and when the skin was put on the outside, people complained, "That's not marble like the old museum. There is no marble at all. The old building was all marble, why isn't this one marble?" Gehry's reply was, "Not enough money is available to use marble. I'm trying to give you as much building as I can for the amount of money that you have. I'm

giving you a big building, a good building, and it's one which your faculty and university art students will like because it's going to have lots of daylight. The studios are going to be big and spacious, and the faculty will have good offices. There will be a fine room for the library, and a small, useful auditorium. All that will be built for less than the budget." Although some of the design was innovative, the contractors were excellent and they built solidly and well. There are no seams, no gaps, no leaks—it's a well-built building, which is good in Toledo's climate.

People continued to find it difficult to understand the new building, but Gehry, who is an eloquent speaker, began to win them over with his practical down to earth comments on what he was designing. Gehry once said, "What I'm giving you on the outside doesn't matter too much; it's the envelope around what I'm giving you inside. I listened to what the students wanted, I listened to what the faculty wanted, I knew the limitations of money, and I'm going to give you everything you need in this structure. The shape is there for a purpose, and the angles are there for a reason, and you may not know it at first, but you will later on."

SMITH: What's the time line on this process?

WITTMANN: It went exactly on schedule; it was about two years to build, I think.

SMITH: So a year to design and two years to build?

WITTMANN: No, not like that. It was even shorter because the designing went right along with construction of the building. The contractor started, and Gehry just kept ahead of him, but it was about two years total. With the completion of the building, architectural critics from various publications like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* praised Gehry's creative concepts. *Time* magazine chose Gehry's Toledo building as the year's best architecture. That vindicated Gehry's building in the eyes of Toledoans. It was the first building to ever receive such national recognition.

Now, to get back to the Getty center buildings, it's not exactly Meier's fault that it's costing so much. As I mentioned, we discovered there were 107 conditions which had to be met before construction could begin—conditions imposed by the city, the county, the state, the coastal commission, and other government agencies. Earthquake studies had to be made, and many other tests and studies had to be made before any construction began. This took years to accomplish. We couldn't even level the top of the hill if they weren't going to give us any permission, so we just left it up there as a wild piece of land and made the studies that needed to be made. One man was placed in charge of the entire process, Stephen Rountree, who's still in charge of overseeing all construction for the Getty Trust. He's very good at it, a great administrator. He

just calmly went through this list of 107 conditions and took the necessary steps to comply.

When he got close to a hundred, we found one snag we hadn't counted on, and that was the neighbors at the foot of the hill. Neighborhood committees were formed to oppose the buildings, which they felt might dominate their view. They objected to the height of the proposed buildings. Stephen Rountree showed them sight lines, and they continued to object. Finally the architect had to lower the buildings by sinking them into the ground, and now the buildings are partially underground.

At one point the fire department also had objections. They wanted to be able to get their trucks up to the center of the hilltop where they could reach all buildings in the event of a fire. So plans had to be altered so two fire trucks side by side could reach the center's plaza at the top.

SMITH: You describe Gehry as a person who was very receptive to the ideas of the people who would be using the building. Were Meier and his staff receptive in this way?

WITTMANN: Not so much so. I am only competent to speak about museum buildings. Meier had built one museum in Atlanta, Georgia. He insisted that he install the art in the Atlanta museum and he was permitted to do so.

SMITH: He had that right?

WITTMANN: Perhaps in Atlanta but not at the Getty. From the very beginning John Walsh said, "No way, you can't touch an object that belongs to us." From the outset he made it clear that Getty curators and the director would install the art in the new museum. Meier had no clear idea about how to deal with daylight in the museum—especially important in California. So John brought in his own lighting experts and there is now a much improved plan for use of daylight, and artificial light in the evening.

Anyway, to end this whole story on Gehry, there was money left over from his Toledo building budget, and the Toledo Museum decided it needed another building to accommodate glass and pottery studios, both of which required furnaces. We didn't want furnaces in the museum building, and we had outgrown the small building which had earlier been used for that purpose. So we asked Gehry to design a simple but adequate building for us, and he is now busy designing a smaller building for glass and pottery workshops. It will be on this same plot of land—near his other studio building but not adjacent to it. So there will be not only one but two Gehry buildings, which I hope won't upset Toledoans too much.

SMITH: There are two other committees I wanted to talk to you about, and one was the grant committee. You've talked about the grant program in general, but I'm curious about your participation and what you wanted to do with the grant

programs.

WITTMANN: As we have discussed before, my main concern was to help scholars to publish art books. That was easy, it made sense to the committee, and we've been doing that successfully and continue to do it. Harold Williams receives a copy for his office of every book that is published under the Getty Grant Program. He takes great pride in showing visitors shelf after shelf of beautiful scholarly publications, saying, "This is what we've done for scholars." So he's sold on the program. We have developed other programs, grants of money to young scholars to help them along with their careers, and we've helped senior scholars to get enough time from their other duties to concentrate on special assignments.

I think the most exciting part of the grant program, which I had not even envisioned earlier, concerns architecture. The architectural program was based on showing natives in poor countries how to build—showing, for example, what adobe could mean historically for them. The Getty provided for some of its conservators who had made a study of adobe and various forms of inexpensive architecture to join workers in Central America who used adobe in their domestic buildings to help them develop improved methods of building that suited the climate.

[Tape XX, Side One]

WITTMANN: Also, this committee assisted in the restoration of tombs in Egypt. Again, it was a question of training Egyptian workmen through having them work beside skilled European conservators so that they could conserve other Egyptian tombs on their own. We've started a project in China along the same lines, and it's too early to tell how that will come out. We have also helped in the preservation of important old houses in America and England.

SMITH: The last thing I wanted to ask you about has to do with your philosophy and your history of viewing museums as a place for everybody, and what you've advised to the Getty, which in some ways, even though it's geographically located in Los Angeles, is very alienated from the city. Since the riots last year I think there's become a greater sense of urgency within the Getty that it should be better integrated into Los Angeles.

WITTMANN: I think the Getty is much concerned with the changes in public attitude and public response, and this is true of almost all museums in this country. The Getty is now very much aware that it is an integral part of the community. Harold Williams, I must say, is a changed man since the riots. He has realized how important it is that we play a greater part in trying to help the community, that is greater Los Angeles. The Getty Trust has given considerable money to help rebuild parts of Los Angeles that were burned so badly. Harold

recommended that the trust give to libraries and to other institutions that we feel we should support. We can't go out and support everything, but we can help institutions related to our programs. Harold has also inaugurated a program within the Getty departments to bring in young people from various races to work in the Getty, either as regular employees or as interns. This summer we are enrolling something like thirty to sixty interns on a reasonable pay scale, to give them a chance to see what a museum is, what the library is all about, and how the administration works. Harold is insistent that the program be practical and successful. Money has been allocated for the program, and we are determined to make possible "learning by doing".

In the meantime, the Getty Museum's educational program has doubled and tripled over the years. The education department is probably the museum's fastest growing department. We're bringing in more professional educators who can talk to children and adults, and we're bringing many more visitors to the museum. We watch the attendance figures very closely. One of the main factors in the new museum will be the ability to accommodate larger numbers of people than can be accommodated in the present museum. The new museum building will be much larger, there will be much more parking available, and it's much closer to town. When we first talked about building new buildings, we had only the Malibu location on the ocean, and I think I was the first one to say that we

ought to move closer to town, first of all, to be near UCLA; secondly, we ought to be able to be reached by freeways and by streets on all four sides—the present museum can only be approached from three directions, the fourth side is the ocean. The Malibu site is an awkward place to reach; it's right on a highway and you can hardly get there without getting involved with heavy traffic. We expect easier access to the new Getty center. I didn't like its placement on a hilltop. I wanted it easily accessible, down on the ground, but the present site will be attractive for other reasons.

I think the Getty Trust's attitude has changed, and I think it changed because of the tragic disasters in Los Angeles. I don't think that we'll ever go back to thinking quite as conservatively as we did about our responsibilities. There are certain aspects of the new site that some people are always going to say are elitist. But I feel the Getty is going to balance that by inviting everyone to come, and urging them to come. We're going to bring as many children as we can fit into those new buildings, and we're going to do more and more education, which is really outreach. We're going to go out into the community and offer lectures outside as well as inside. We already have a national public school program under the skilled direction of Lani Duke, and we hope to do more. So we're making the effort. The president, trustees and staff of the Getty are all concerned, and many already take part in some kind of public service among the

people who need it. This can only be a helpful effort—an effort in the right direction.

SMITH: I don't have any further questions, but I wonder if there's anything further you'd like to say, or if there's anything that we've left out of this account.

WITTMANN: It's been very thorough. I feel I've talked much too much and I must have repeated much of this more than one time. I would like to say in closing, as I've said before, I have spent most of my life in museums, and I have always felt that my goal in life was to do something for others. I felt very strongly about that at the end of the war when I had seen so much destruction in Europe. I decided that if I could find a way to do it, I would devote my life to constructive work rather than to further destruction, and I always felt that perhaps the museum was the best way in which I could do that. That's the reason I went to Toledo, not so much because of the art collection but because of the education possibilities. It later turned out that the art became an important part of it, but the outreach to the public, and what we could do in that area, in Toledo and later at the Getty, has always meant more to me than anything. So if I've contributed a little bit to the happiness and maybe depth of feeling of some people in the world, well maybe that's a good thing.

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